TOWARDS THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY

THE MAKING OF RAV KOOK, 1865-1904

Jewish Thought, Jewish History: New Studies
Series Editor: Gregg Stern, PhD

TOWARDS THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE OF MODERNITY

THE MAKING OF RAV KOOK, 1865-1904

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BOSTON
2021

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Mirsky, Yehudah, author.
Title: Towards the Mystical Experience of Modernity: The Making of Rav Kook, 1865-1904 / Yehudah Mirsky.
Description: Boston : Academic Studies Press, 2019. | Series: Jewish thought, Jewish history: new studies | Identifiers: LCCN 2019019117 (print) | LCCN 2019020852 (ebook) | ISBN 9781618119544 (adobe PDF) | ISBN 9781618119537 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781618119551 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Kook, Abraham Isaac, 1865-1935. | Rabbis--Europe, Eastern--Biography. | Jewish philosophy. | Religious Zionism--Philosophy. | Europe, Eastern--Biography.
Classification: LCC BM755.K66 (ebook) | LCC BM755.K66 M577 2019 (print) | DDC 296.8/32092 [B] --dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019019117

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9781618119537 hardback
9781618119544 ebook PDF
9781618119551 paperback
9781644695302 ePub

Book design by Lapiz Digital Services
Cover design by Ivan Grave

Published by Academic Studies Press
1577 Beacon Street
Brookline, MA 02446, USA
press@academicstudiespress.com
www.academicstudiespress.com

In Memory of My Teachers

Rabbi Yehudah Amital
הרב יהודה עמיטל
(1924–2010)

Rabbi Emanuel Rackman
הרב מנחם רקמן
(1910–2020)

Rabbi David Mirsky
אבי מורי הרב דוד מירסקי
(1921–1982)

הגיד לך אדם מה טוב ומה ד׳ דורש ממך כי אם עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם אלהיך

(מיכה ו:ח)

He has told you, human, what is good, and what God seeks from you, but doing justice and lovingkindness and walking in humility with your God.

(Micah 6:8)

Contents

To the Reader viii

Abbreviations and Acronyms xi

Note on Translation and Transliteration xiii

Introduction 1

1. Childhood and Early Years: Between Mitnagdism, Hasidism, and Haskalah 41
2. All in the Mind: The Writings of the Zeimel Period 90
3. Boisk: Turning Inward at the Crossroads of Mussar and *Tiqqun* 140
4. *'Eyn Ayah*: Intellect, Imagination, Self-Expression, Prophecy 183
5. The Turn Towards Nationalism: Between Ideology and Utopia, or, Ethics and Eschatology 233
6. "The New Guide of the Perplexed" and "The Last in Boisk": Making Sense of Heresy en Route to Zion 278

Conclusion 329

Acknowledgments 348

Bibliography 351

Index 381

To the Reader

This volume seeks to understand how one extraordinary, and extraordinarily influential, thinker and public figure, Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, came to be who he was, amid the dynamic, intellectual, spiritual, and political currents of Jewish Eastern Europe of the fin-de-siècle. Though much has, and continues to be, written on him, relatively little has been done on the nearly four decades of his life before his arrival in Palestine in 1904, and there is no comprehensive intellectual biography of him in any language. This book seeks to start filling that gap, telling a story of both the ideas and the man.

The volume traces an arc of development in his thinking, whose points of reference in the currents of Jewish intellectual history are Lithuanian Talmudism and Kabbalah, the heritage of medieval Jewish philosophy, and modern thought, as filtered through the Eastern European Jewish culture of the time. Our sociohistorical points of reference are Lithuanian rabbinic culture, Haskalah, the Mussar controversies of the 1890s, and the emergence of Jewish ethical radicalism and Zionist nationalism in response to the massive crises of Jewish religion, politics, and society in the late nineteenth century. The book traces how, ultimately, in the mind of this one thinker, these points converged.

We will, in the first, second, and third chapters, view his thinking well within the frames of Lithuanian Talmudism and moderate Haskalah, placing particular focus on medieval philosophy and Lithuanian Kabbalah—and in the primacy which those currents accord to Mind as the defining principle of humanity and the world. In response to events in his own life, most notably the death of his first wife, as well as external events, in particular the debates over the Mussar movement and its emphasis on self-cultivation within a non-Hasidic framework, we will see Rav Kook using those traditions as maps to the inner life, especially in his journals. We will also see his burgeoning interest in the relationship between Judaism and ethical universalism and between body and soul.

The midpoint, the fourth chapter of the book, and in some ways its fulcrum, is an extended discussion of his aggadic commentary, noteworthy for his choice of subject, and for the ways in which a close reading of that commentary demonstrates subtle but deeply consequential shifts in his understanding of the conceptual vocabulary of the tradition. We will watch him broadening his horizons towards a richer palette of human consciousness and metaphysics, encompassing imagination and feeling, and observe how his exploration of the relationships between these dimensions of human experience led him to develop a dialectical view of the inner life, in which the tension of seeming opposites

yields a greater, richer whole. This recourse to dialectical thinking as the way to engage contradictions assumed increasing significance in his thought, as he came to extend it beyond the individual's life, and towards the highly conflicted social, political, and ideological struggles of his times.

The fifth chapter looks at his early reflections on Zionism and first published writings on Jewish nationalism. In them, we see him fashioning nationalism and ethics into a mutually supportive structure that might speak to the youth culture of the time, as well as a robust affirmation of tradition. The final, sixth, chapter discusses at length his attempt to present youthful radicals with a perspective on ethics and comparative religion that would integrate traditional Judaism and ethical universalism—and how that exoteric view was rooted in the esoteric refections in his private journals and their far-reaching explorations of the Kabbalah.

The conclusion starts by examining how this story set the stage for deeply consequential shifts in his thought after his arrival in Palestine, and closes with reflections on this story—of a man who developed an extraordinary theology in an effort to understand not only his times, but himself—for the study of Jewish thought and religion and the meaning of religious experience.

***

The present volume revises and expands my doctoral dissertation, *An Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhaq Ha-Cohen Kook from 1865 to 1904*, submitted to Harvard University's Committee on the Study of Religion in the Spring of 2007.

More than a dozen years have passed. Since then, I have published a number of studies of Rav Kook and, in 2014, a volume surveying Rav Kook's life, times, and legacy as a whole—*Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*. I chose for a number of reasons to publish that work first, and only then return to this much more detailed monograph on his formative years. Those intervening years also saw my moving from Jerusalem to Boston's Brandeis University and, while completing this book, a move back to Jerusalem, and a shift in my scholarly interests to questions of religion and nationalism and the theological foundations of liberalism and human rights. Yet time has not diminished my sense of the stakes, urgency, and deep intellectual, spiritual, and moral rewards of the careful study of Rav Kook's life and thought.

Research into Rav Kook's corpus has, to put it mildly, continued apace in the intervening years, including, in some part due to my dissertation, intensified interest in his Eastern European decades and in tracing the development of his thought over time. Most significantly, more and more hitherto unavailable and even unknown writings of his have been published from manuscript, in various editions, including some written during the period we will be learning about here. I have done my best to incorporate these new researches and primary sources into this revision, which, if nothing else, provides a survey of these voluminous writings and leaves road markers for others to follow. Similarly, I have decided to leave much material in the footnotes, along with citations of

my innmumerable scholarly debts, in the hopes that students and scholars will find, pick up, and carry forward all that I have not had time to do. In general, because there are few full-length studies of Rav Kook in English, I have chosen to err on the side of inclusion. While this is in many ways an academic volume, I hope it will find readers outside the precincts of universities, as would befit its subject, who himself tried greatly to expand communities of learning and understanding.

How well I have achieved this I leave the reader to judge; I hope that I have at least provided an introduction to, and initial framing of, these additions to the corpus of his Rav Kook's writings, still expanding some eighty-five years after his death. I have, in light of the new publications, somewhat revised and amplified earlier findings, but the basic outlines that I traced a dozen years ago still, I think, endure.

Doing full justice to even these few decades in the life of as colossal a figure as Rav Kook would have taken even more years; I have chosen to publish now, heeding Winston Churchill's legendary maxim that we must not let the best be the enemy of the good or, at least, the good enough.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Aderet—Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim
DC—*Da'at Cohen*
EAB—*'Eyn Ayah* to BT Berakhot
EC—*'Ezrat Cohen*
EJ—*Encyclopedia Judaica*
HP—*Hevesh Pe'er*
IS—*'Ittur Sofrim*
Igrot—*Igrot Ha-Re'ayah*
NLI—National Library of Israel, Givat Ram, Jerusalem
LNH—*Li-Nevukhei Ha-Dor*
Maimon, *Azkarah*—J. L. Fishman (Maimon), *Toldot Ha-Rav*
MA—*Mussar Avikha*
MH—*Ma'amarei Ha-Re'ayah*
MQ—*Metziot Qatan*
MQB—*Mahberot Qetanot Boisk*
MS—*Midbar Shur*
Neriah, *Sihot*—Moshe Zvi Neriah, *Sihot Ha-Re'ayah*
Neriah, *Tal*—Moshe Zvi Neriah, *Tal Ha-Re'ayah*
Netziv—Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin
OM—*Orah Mishpat*
Otzarot—Moshe Zuriel, ed., *Otzarot Ha-Re'ayah*, 2nd ed.
PAB—*Pinqas Aharon be-Boisk*

Note on Translation and Transliteration

Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Rav Kook and from most other texts are my own. For translations of Hebrew Bible, I have consulted the Jewish Publication Society translation of 1985, as well as the translations of Robert Alter, Ariel and Chana Bloch, Harold Fisch, Everett Fox, and the King James Version, and in each instance have chosen the translation best suited to the text and context in which that Biblical verse appears. Translations from the Talmud are largely my own, though I have occasionally made use of the Artscroll, Soncino, and Steinsaltz translations of the Babylonian Talmud.

My transliteration essentially follows the style of the Society for Biblical Literature, while adopting as necessary other transliterations that either have become widely accepted (Kabbalah, Kook, Yitzhak) or have been chosen as such by the subjects themselves (e.g., Chayim Pearl).

Inevitable errors and infelicities of translation and transliteration, as well as fact and interpretation, are mine.

I knew what a large role a rabbi like this would play in the development of the Yishuv [the Jewish community of Palestine], but I was not terribly interested in this rabbi. He had taken no part in Hibat Tzion, or, later, Zionism. He hadn't written important books, so what would I have had to do with him? So I decided to be in the new rabbi's home and get a proper sense of him. I spent three days in the city of Boisk, and spent several hours each day in the rabbi's home and we discussed various matters in halakhah, aggadah, and life questions. I saw before me no ordinary rabbi, following well-worn paths, but a man of the spirit, paving his own way. He hadn't found it yet, but was searching for it, in all the length and breadth of Judaism. He was diving into the seas of the Talmuds, Midrashim, Philosophy, Kabbalah, Hasidism, and the new Hebrew literature, and bringing up precious stones with which to pave his way.

—Yitzhaq Nissenbaum (1868–1942),
'Alei Heldi (Warsaw: Halter,
1929), 188[1]

1 Nissenbaum, rabbi, writer, and activist, was, from the 1890s on, until his death in the Warsaw Ghetto, a leading figure in Religious Zionism.

Introduction

Precis

> In dealing with a character of Rav Kook's stature one cannot make do with dry facts. We need a biography describing the man's path, his spiritual development, and his personal and public struggles. . . . Dynamic unity was the goal of his thought in all its dimensions, and one can nearly say that an astounding unitive instinct came to expression in an equally astounding range of issues. How can one convey that intuition? By a reflective reconstruction of the process of his thought. The scholar must construct Rav Kook's view in all its scope by attending to the process through which it took shape.[1]

> If one has, as I do, theological mentors from across the ages, then it is valuable to realize that their insights on spiritual matters come framed by their particular personal and cultural circumstances. . . . Everything is, of course, time-bound and there is a danger for us who are so shaped by historical consciousness to dismiss every authority from the past once we have understood the peculiarities of the historical, personal, or theoretical factors that shaped its outlook. A far more profitable approach is to employ historical consciousness for developing more *discriminating* assessments of the wisdom of the past. The point of historical scholarship should not be, as it so often is today, simply to take things apart, to destroy myths, or to say that what looks simple is really quite complex. It should also be to help people see how to put things back together again. We need to use history for the guidance it offers, learning from great figures in the past—both in their brilliance and in their shortcomings. Otherwise we are stuck with only the wisdom of the present.[2]

Trying fully to grasp how anyone came to be, is as futile as it is essential. All the more so when approaching one of those colossal spiritual figures, whose ideas fundamentally recast the worlds of actions and ideas.

The coming to be of Rabbi (Rav) Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook (1865–1935) is no exception. How did a Lithuanian Talmudist with a Hasidic strain become a profound theologian, jurist, lyric poet, major communal leader, and astounding mystic, who

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1 Eliezer Schweid, "Sefer Hadash 'al Mishnat Ha-Re'ayah Kook," *Petahim* 28, no. 2 (1974): 36–37. Schweid was reviewing Zvi Yaron's pioneering book-length exposition of Rav Kook's teachings *Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1974).

2 George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 502.

reconceived modernity's revolt against tradition as the advent of redemption and its celebration of personal experience as "holiness"'s own rebirth? The question takes on more urgency due to his deep influence on society and politics, down to the present, perhaps more than any other rabbinic thinker in modern times.

"Of the making of books there is no end" (Eccles. 12:12); that is certainly the case with Rav Kook as volumes by and about him continue to appear[3] and the interpretation of his teachings, especially their political dimensions, still makes for daily editorial and ideological fare.[4] Yet, there are still many holes to fill, thematic and methodological both, and this work seeks to start on one of them: Rav Kook's first thirty-eight years, before his immigration to Palestine.[5]

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3 The most signifcant of Rav Kook's own writings to emerge from manuscript in recent years are: the eight volumes of spiritual diaries which formed the basis of *Orot* and *Orot Ha-Qodesh*, published as *Shemonah Qevatzim* [Eight Compilations], 3 vols., rev. ed. (Jerusalem: n.p., 2004); his commentary to the aggadic passages of BT Berakhot and Shabbat, *'Eyn Ayah*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, 5755–5760/1995–2000), his early collection of sermons *Midbar Shur* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, 1999); a collection of deeply personal reflections entitled *Hadarav*, 2nd ed. (Mevaseret Tzion: Re'ut, 2002); and several other spiritual diaries, including five which we will discuss here at greater length: *Pinqasim* 15 and 16, *Metziot Qatan*, *Mahberot Qetanot Boisk* and *Pinqas Aharon be-Boisk*, and the long-unpublished treatise *Li-Nevukhei Ha-Dor*. Many of those appear in a series of journals which have been published in three volumes—see *Qevatzim mi-Ketav Yad Qodsho*, 3 vols., ed. Boaz Ofan (Jerusalem: n.p., 2006-2008). They have also been published under the imprint of Ha-Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, whose editorial practices regularly cross the line between editing and censorship. To take one example: one of the diaries in this collection, and the first written by Rav Kook after his immigration to Palestine in 1904, was published as *Pinqas Yud-Gimel* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, 2004). Comparing it with the version printed by Ofan, the manuscript photocopy of which is in the Schatz collection of Hebrew University, we see that roughly one-quarter was excised from the printed edition, with scarcely any notice to the reader. The excisions are notes and restored in Boaz Ofan's edition.

Other crucial tools are Boaz Ofan's invaluable topical index of Rav Kook's writings, *Maftehot le-Khitvei Ha-Re'ayah* (Ramat Gan: Re'ut, 2002) and the multiple indices to be found in Moshe Zuriel's series *Otzarot*.

4 The literature on the political uses of Rav Kook's teachings is vast and of varying quality; for three, excellent studies of different aspect of Rav Kook's contemporary political legacy in Israel, see Yosef (Yoske) Ahituv, "Erkei Mussar u-Le'umiyut be-Hugei Merkaz Ha-Rav," in *Sefer Zikaron le-Professor Zev Falk zl: Ma'amarim be-Mada'ei Ha-Yahadut u-vi-She'elot Ha-Sha'ah*, ed. Rivka Horvitz, Moshe David Herr, Yohanan David Silman, and Michael Cordinali (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes, 2005), 279–306; Shlomo Fischer, "Self-Expression and Democracy in Radical Religious Zionist Ideology" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 2007); idem, "Radical Religious Zionism: From the Collective to the Individual," in *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival*, ed. Boaz Huss (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press), 2011, 285–310; Idem. "Fundamentalist or Religious Nationalist?: Israeli Modern Orthodoxy," in *Dynamic Belonging: Contemporary Jewish Collective Identities*, ed. Harvey E. Goldberg et al. (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 91–111; and Gershom Gorenberg, *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967–1977* (New York: Times Books, 2006).

5 While he is conventionally said to have emigrated at age thirty-nine, he in fact was born September 7, 1865/16 Elul 5625, and arrived in Palestine May 13, 1904/28 Iyar 5664, making him thirty-eight at the time.

the voluminous scholarship about him has long scanted those years. Yet in those decades he wrote numerous volumes of textual commentary, sermons, essays, polemic, theology, morals, poetry, responsa, and halakhic discourse, all while serving as a rabbi and communal leader. We still have an insufficient scholarly biography (or bibliography) of him, and no full-scale intellectual biography, about which more below. This work aims to fill, in part, those lacunae.

Along with its biographical and bibliographical excavation, this work argues that these early, largely neglected works repay study in their own right.[6] In contrast to his later, celebrated writings, grounded in mystical experience and centered on the interlocking relationships between subjective selfhood, national identity, universalist ethics and an overarching metaphysic, these earlier works are concerned chiefly with the moral and spiritual self-cultivation of the individual person. They are richly insightful and lay bare the groundwork for his eventual turns towards nationalism and ecstatic mysticism.

As we will see, Rav Kook's writings in the first decade of his rabbinical life, from the mid–1880s to the mid–1890s, are chiefly preoccupied with the lone sage's cultivation of perfection—through the body's alignment with the mind. In these writings, he reworks ideas of self-cultivation taken from the medieval philosophical tradition into the terms set by Lithuanian Kabbalah. This concern with self-cultivation on the medieval model stands in marked contrast to—yet constructs much of the scaffolding for—his later canonical writings, which are marked by mystic ecstasy and deeply concerned with nationalism, Messianism, and the depiction and exploration of the expressive subject, individual and national, as the locus of the divine.

In the mid–1890s these explorations become linked to his mounting reflection on the meaning of Jewish nationhood, and the relationship of Jewish morality to the moral lives of non-Jews, who, as well, are God's creatures and part of His plan for the world. In the first years of the twentieth century, Rav Kook begins actively to bring these reflections to bear on interpreting the broader political, intellectual, and social currents of his times.

While, as we shall see, Rav Kook did indeed study Kabbalah from early on, his internalizing Kabbalistic ideas as maps to his own dynamic inner world, society, the nation, and the world, grew over time. This shift in his thinking, from what one may call a top-down image of the religious life, in which the sovereign mind disciplines the emotions and the body, to a bottom-up image, in which the body and the emotions reach upwards towards reunion with the dynamic divine subject, all within the highly structured forms of tradition, is a chief focus of our study. A related shift is his move from the individual to the collective, deploying the thought structures he developed to map his inner world and those of the people around him to map the inner life of the collective, and, eventually, the cosmos.

6 This assertion has become more widely accepted since the dissertation on which this work is based was completed in 2007, but is still worth repeating.

Mapping Rav Kook

The mapping doesn't stop there. Disciples and students of Rav Kook, in the *beit midrash* and in the academy, in his lifetime and afterwards, have found, and still find themselves, confronted by a colossal figure, controversial in his time and today, defying easy characterization. He was first and foremost a halakhist reared and educated in the high scholastic traditions of Lithuanian Talmudism, and throughout his life his communal responsibilities as rabbi and halakhic decision maker took up most of his time. Rav Kook's stature as a Talmudist was the backbone of his personal and public identity (much of which was devoted not to theology but to hands-on communal leadership), lent force to his distinctive endorsements of modernity and made him so challenging and provocative a figure within the Orthodox rabbinic fraternity, many if not most of whose members regarded his *sui generis* worldview as misguided if not downright heretical.

At the same time he exhibited deep knowledge of, and engagement with, non-halakhic literature, including such medieval and early modern philosophical classics as Bahya's *Hovot Ha-Levavot*, Yehudah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, Maimonides's *Guide*, and Isaac Arama's *'Aqedat Yitzhaq*. He was, as we will see, in love with the study of aggadah, the non-halakhic texts of rabbinic literature. The then-less-well-known works of Maharal of Prague were also of great importance to him for their ideas and, more importantly, for their hermeneutic method.[7] He was, crucially, steeped in Kabbalah; in his youth he studied and imbibed the the classics of Kabbalah from antiquity through early modernity; the works of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, and the traditions of Lithuanian Kabbalah; with time he engaged deeply with Hasidic thought, and even had some experience of practical and magical Kabbalah. Further, elements of Haskalah literature and of general literature and philosophy played a substantial role in his thought-world.

He lived an unimpeachable if at times unconventional ultra-Orthodox life (his practice of wearing phylacteries all day, though not unheard of, was by no means common) and was a decidedly conservative halakhist; yet in his theological writings he affirms key elements of modernity, explicitly refers to Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Soloviev, and Bergson, and regularly engages in explicit dialogue with Spinoza and implicit though unmistakable dialogue with Schelling, Moses Hess, Herder, and Hegel. We know he read William James and Hermann Cohen, as well as, later on, Charles Dickens. Much of his acquaintance with these writings was derived second hand from the rich Hebrew periodical literature of the time, and the writings of modern Jewish thinkers such as Krochmal and lesser-known cultural intermediaries such as Shimon Bernfeld and David Neumark. The striking thing is the way in which he tried to incorporate as much as he could of these ideas into his own evolving worldview. The stakes of this engagement with modern thought went far deeper than intellectual exploration. While most of his rabbinic colleagues saw modernity as a catastrophe, he came to see it for all its vicissitudes as perhaps

7 See Adin Steinsaltz, "Ha-Ba'ayatiyut be'-Orot Ha-Qodesh," in *Ha-Re'ayah*, ed. Yizhak Refael (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1966), 102–105. I will have more to say about his relationship to the works of Maharal in chapter four.

the most deeply promising and even redemptive chapter in Jewish and world history. And he actively worked to put that vision into action.

After his move to Palestine in 1904, and especially after about 1910, Rav Kook developed and expressed his theological views in an avowedly unsystematic, lyrical idiom, drawing on the full range of his reading. The interpretive challenge here was well captured by Jacob Agus in a pioneering essay in 1948, in which he characterized Rav Kook as "perhaps the first mystical literary philosopher in the history of Jewish religion."[8]

His personal charisma, enhanced by his vivid personal appearance, and the great gentleness and saintliness with which he tried to conduct himself, left a deep impression on many of those who met him[9]—with significant exceptions, of course[10]—and indeed much of that charisma courses through his writings and accounts for their electrifying effect on many of his readers.[11]

It is small wonder, then, that students and scholars, confronted with this compelling and complex persona, have tried to gain some footing by way of numerous points of view. One complicating feature of Rav Kook studies is the Byzantine state of his corpus.[12]

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8 Jacob Agus, "Ish Ha-Mistorin," *Talpiot* 3, nos. 3–4 (1948): 528–578, 528. Indeed, he very much wished to be thought of as a member of the Hebrew literary fraternity, see the striking comments of his recorded by one of his disciples during the 1920s, Samuel K. Mirsky, "Ha-Dor bi-Reiy Ha-Re'ayah," *Or Ha-Mizrah*, December 1965, 101–105, 104–105:
יודע אני מתוך שיחות אינטימיות שהיו לי עם הרב זצ"ל, שהיה מאוכזב ממאמריו שלו שכתב בצורה ספרותית נאה ובבהירות רבה, ולא היתה להן התגובה המקווה. בהרבה מהם קלע כנגד אחד העם אם כי לא בהזכרת שמו, ופעם אמר לי: אחד העם היה בעל מוח אך חסר לב, כלומר חסר רגש, והתפלא על השפעתו על הדור. ומה תועלת, אמר, בכתיבת דברים ברורים בשאלות שהדור מתחבט בהן אם אין להם הד. דברי תורה בהלכה ובאגדה סופם שילמדו בבית המדרש ויעשו להם אזנים מה שאין כן במאמרים פובליציסטיים.

9 The testimonies to his personal charisma are legion. One very powerful testament of the deep impression Rav Kook regularly left on his interlocutors is the memoir of S. Y. Agnon written in 1967 and reprinted in his collection *Me-'Atzmi el 'Atzmi* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 2000), noteworthy in its own right and for his recording the deep impression Rav Kook's penetrating eyes left on none other than Marc Chagall. Agnon's story "Ha-Taba'at," reprinted in his posthumous collection *Takhrikh shel Sippurim* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1984), 218–220, was, he said to Dov Sadan, about Rav Kook (this was related to me by Professor Menachem Friedman in the summer of 1998). See also the passage in Agnon's novel *Temol Shilshom* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1967), 482, wherein Rav Kook appears as the unnamed "Rabbi from Jaffa." See also the powerful sketch by Rebbe Binyomin (Joshua Radler-Feldman) in his *Partzufim*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Mitzpeh, 1936), 125–133.

10 The opposition which Rav Kook met among his more conservative-minded rabbinic peers is the stuff of legend; more interesting are the mixed reactions he garnered among the secular Zionists who played such a large role in his historiosophy; for more on this, see at length, Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). A revised Hebrew edition is idem, *Rav Kook: Mabat Hadash* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 2021).

11 His saintliness and charisma are the thrust of much of the hagiographic writing about him; for one of the better-known, and least floridly done, hagiographies of him, see Hayim Lifshitz, *Shivhei Ha-Re'ayah* (Jerusalem: Makhon Harry Fischel, 1979).

12 A selective scholarly bibliography published in 1995 listed (after the then-standing list of thirty-two primary works by him) some 254 books, chapters, essays, articles, and monographs

Manuscripts, not least his spiritual diaries, from which most of his canon was culled, have emerged in printed editions of varying integrity; readers have had to wade through the great masses of materials gathered in the sprawling (and often hard-to-find) volumes of Moshe Zvi Neriah, Yehoshua Be'eri, and Moshe Zuriel.[13]

Consequently, it is worth taking a moment to say something about this cataloguing itself, which, in the multifaceted and very complicated case of Rav Kook, is better thought of as "mapping."[14]

The process of "mapping" Rav Kook began even in his lifetime. Yossi Avneri has traced some of the formation of his public image, among the elites and the public, his supporters and opponents, those (both within and without the Zionist camp) who saw him as a rubber stamp for the Zionist enterprise, and those who saw him as yet another rabbinic obscurantist; those who admired his freedom and courage, and those who unfavorably contrasted the comparative boldness he exhibited during his years in the frontier region of Jaffa with the more cautious posture with which he threaded his way among the legendary fanatics of Jerusalem; and, finally, those, both religious and secular, who saw him as spiritual giant, as well as people for whom he was a *faux* modernist and essentially reactionary. Avneri wisely suggests that none of the one-dimensional views of Rav Kook, from any camp, do justice to the complexity of his personality.[15]

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devoted to him, along with sixteen annotated translations of various texts into English. The bibliography appears as an appendix to Lawrence Kaplan and David Shatz, *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 309–324. Among the more significant omissions from that list are: Martin Buber's essay on Rav Kook in *On Zion*, trans. Stanley Goodman (New York: Schocken, 1973), 147–154; Agnon's various writings on Rav Kook in his *Me-'Atzmi el 'Atzmi* and elsewhere (about which more below); Gershom Scholem's brief but significant remarks in his essay of 1963 "Hirhurim 'al Efsharutah shel Mistikah Yehudit be-Yameinu," reprinted in his *Devarim be-Go: Pirqei Morasha u-Tehiya*, vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1982), 71–83. The academic corpus continues to grow as will be seen by the many scholarly studies cited in this work.

13 Moshe Zuriel, *Otzarot Ha-Re'ayah*, 7 vols., 2nd ed. (Rishon le-Zion: Yeshivat Ha-Hesder Rishon Le-Zion, 2002–2016) (from here on, *Otzarot*); Yehoshua Be'eri, *'Oved Yisrael bi-Qedushah*, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv: H. Y. KH., 1989). Zuriel's volumes are a fantastic resource, as will become clear in the course of this work. Be'eri also has much valuable information to offer. Neriah's works, which are invaluable but must, as will become clear, be read with some caution, are too numerous to list here, but will appear throughout.

14 I am here taking a leaf from the title essay of J. Z. Smith's extraordinary collection *Map Is Not Territory*. He writes: "Such are three maps of the worlds of other men [which he designates as the 'locative,' 'utopian,' and 'incongruous']. . . . They remain coeval possibilities which may be appropriated whenever and wherever they correspond to man's experience of the world. Other maps will be drawn as the scholar of religions continues his task. . . . We need to reflect on and play with the necessary incongruity of our maps before we set out on a voyage of discovery to chart the worlds of other men. For the dictum of Alfred Korzybski is inescapable: 'Map is not territory'—but maps are all we possess." Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 289–309, 309.

15 Yossi Avneri, "Ha-Re'ayah Kook—Tadmit be-Tahalikhei Hitgabshut," *Sefer Bar-Ilan* 23–24 (2001): 161–187.

In some ways this "mapping" began with Rav Kook's own attempts to understand himself, as in his spiritual diaries he again and again tries to order the categories of his own thinking, categories he then abandons, until his next try.[16] In the early decades that are our subject he tried writing in a variety of genres; all, I believe, were part of his attempt to find a proper voice for himself, and his increasingly far-reaching visions. In the end, as we will see, he settled more or less on the spiritual diary as the most fitting vehicle of his explorations, a genre that fit the highly eclectic nature of his thinking, as well as the very personal subjective directions in which he and his thinking were headed.

Many Editorial Hands

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that most of the volumes bearing Rav Kook's name, and virtually all those that became canonical in the first sixty years after his death, were compiled and edited by his disciples and successors.[17] The most renowned of these are the volumes edited by his son Zvi Yehudah, *Orot* and *Orot Ha-Teshuvah*, on, respectively, the religious meaning of modern Jewish nationalism and the metaphysics (if you will, metahistorics) of repentance; and the theological magnum opus edited by David Cohen (also called *Ha-Nazir*, the Nazirite), *Orot Ha-Qodesh*.[18] In terms of editing style,

16 See for instance the three opening chapters of *Orot Ha-Teshuvah*, published in his lifetime in 1925, where he begins a systematic classification of forms of repentance, only to abandon it, leaving his son to cull from the spiritual diaries the remaining fourteen chapters, which are unquestionably more riveting and dynamic than the first three; for another example, see the passage with which Nazir editorially chose to open volume three of *Orot Ha-Qodesh*, entitled *Mussar Ha-Qodesh*, wherein Rav Kook says that an introduction to the study of Mussar/morality-cum-ethics needs to distinguish between eighteen different kinds of Mussar (*Orot Ha-Qodesh*, 3:19; the original is found in *Qevatzim*, 1:683 and was written in about 1910). While Nazir places this passage at the outset of his discussion of ethics, the thrust of this dissertation will read it after decades of writing by Rav Kook, chiefly in Eastern Europe, about the meaning of Mussar, that is, this passage reflects his own recogntion of the extraordainrily broad range of meanings he had hitherto been assigning the term.

17 Meir Munitz treats this at length in his dissertation. Some key findings are discussed in his article, "'Arikhat Ha-Sefer Orot, le-Re'ayah Kook," *'Alei Sefer* 20 (2008): 125–170. See also Udi Abramovich, "Ha-Shelihut, Ha-Monopol ve-Ha-Tzensurah—Ha-Ratzyah Kook ve-'Arikhat Kitvei Ha-Re'ayah," *Da'at* 60 (2007): 121–152. Jonatan Meir, "Orot ve-Kelim: Behinah Mehudeshet shel 'Hug' Ha-Re'ayah Kook ve-'Orkhei Ketavav," *Qabbalah* 13 (2005): 163–247 is a truly indispensable guide to this crucial and complicated question and a treasure of cultural history in its own right. The protocols of the society formed after Rav Kook's passing in 1935 for the purpose of editing and publishing his works is to be found in Gutel, "Protocol Ha-Agudah le-Hotza'at Kitvei Ha-Rav Kook," 340–353. The society's prospectus was published in the fall of 1937 as *Prospekt le-Hotza'at Kitvei Rabeinu Ha-Gadol, Sar Ha-Torah ve-Abir Ha-Umah, Tzadiq Yesod 'Olam Maran Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook zl* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1937). The text of the prospectus was written by the society's chair, Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan).

18 For the genesis of Nazir's editorial project, begun in 1922, see his memoir reprinted in the memorial volume edited by his son Shear-Yashuv Cohen et al., *Nezir Ehav*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Nezer David, 1977), 297–302. The very last passage of *Orot Ha-Qodesh* in galleys that Rav

while Zvi Yehudah Kook kept lengthy passages intact even as he wove them into essays, Ha-Nazir imposed order and system, embedding discrete passages into a vast latticework of his own devising.[19] Zvi Yehudah Kook was also responsible for editing, *inter alia*, most of Rav Kook's commentary to the prayer book *'Olat Re'ayah*,[20] a slim but powerful volume on Torah study, *Orot Ha-Torah*, the Mussar treatise we will explore at length entitled *Mussar Avikha*, and a number of his halakhic works. Several compilations were made by others with Rav Kook's cooperation in his lifetime.[21] Indeed, the more Rav Kook's journals have been published in their original form the more we see how much editing they needed before publication, and how hard his editors had to work.

It is instructive to compare the 1920 edition of *Orot* prepared by Zvi Yehudah Kook with another, much smaller, anthology of Rav Kook's writings, *Ha-Mahshavah Ha-Yisraelit*, compiled by Elhanan Kalmanson in the same year.[22] Kalmanson was a journalist and socialist; he, unlike Zvi Yehudah Kook, had no access to Rav Kook's spiritual diaries but was in contact with the literary circle gathered around Rav Kook in Jaffa, notably Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz (Azar);[23] the Rav Kook who emerges in those pages is far more conflicted and, you might say, contemporary than one would gather from the ex cathedra pronouncements of *Orot*.[24]

The differing ideational emphases of Zvi Yehudah Kook and Ha-Nazir are unmistakable: whereas Zvi Yehudah Kook's editorial work proceeded with a decidedly nationalist

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Kook saw in his lifetime was the passage entitled "binyan ha-qodesh" [2:310] (section 16 of "Ha-Qodesh Ha-Kelali"). This is according to Shmuel Barukh Shulman's *Esh Dat* (Jerusalem: Eretz Yizrael Press, 1936), 10, in which he says that the Nazir brought it to Rav Kook on Friday, Rosh Hodesh Elul, just three days before his death, and that when Rav Kook looked at it "he laughed and cried."

19 See Bezalel Naor's comments in the preface to his translation of the 1920 edition of *Orot* (Northvale: Aronson, 1993), 3. Neriah Gutel has argued that Zvi Yehudah Kook's editing greatly improved his father's work; see his "Omanut ve-Aminut be-'Arikhat Ha-Ratzyah Kook et Kitvei Ha-Re'ayah Kook: 'Arikhat Ha-Mavo' le-'Shabbat Ha-Aretz'—Miqreh Mivhan," *Tarbitz* 70 (2001): 601–625. However, in that essay he does not present us with the full original of the particular text he uses to buttress his claim (the introduction to *Shabbat Ha-Aretz*, Rav Kook's controversial 1910 treatise on the laws of the Sabbatical year), presumably because his receipt of the manuscript was contingent on his not publishing it, so we have to take his word for it.

20 Much of *'Olat Re'ayah* was taken from the aggadic commentary *'Eyn Ayah*, which is the subject of this book's fourth chapter.

21 These are *Orot Ha-Emunah* edited by Moshe Gurvitz and published only in Jerusalem: n.p., 1985; *Eretz Hefetz*, edited by Yeshayahu Shapira (Jerusalem: Darom, 1930). Shapira, known as the Admor He-Halutz, was a rarity, a dynastic Hasidic rabbi who embraced Zionism; his brother was the celebrated Kalonymous Shapiro, best known for the sermons he preached in the Warsaw Ghetto, published posthumously as *Esh Qodesh* (Jerusalem, n.p., 1960). For more on them, see Meir, "Orot ve-Kelim": 202–208, 214–216.

22 Rav Kook, *Ha-Mahshavah Ha-Yisraelit*, comp. Elhanan Kalmanson (Jerusalem: Levi, 1920).

23 For more on Kalmanson, see Meir, "Orot ve-Kelim": 199–202.

24 For instance it is in Kalmanson's volume that we find Rav Kook's comment, apropos Yosef Hayim Brenner, "He who says my soul is torn, is right." On this see my *Rav Kook*, 90-91.

slant, Ha-Nazir tried to construct out of Rav Kook's diaries a universal metaphysics.[25] This emphasis is evident among Zvi Yehudah's disciples—most notably Shlomo Aviner, Zvi Tau, Uzi Kalcheim, Ya'aqov Filber—for whom Rav Kook's teachings on nationalism are the central organizing principle of the corpus (Yoel Bin-Nun is an interesting exception here).[26] Nazir, for his part, himself very much imbued with the Messianic consciousness of Rav Kook's immediate and mystically oriented Jerusalem circle, and the one member thereof with a broad philosophical education, nonetheless saw in his master's teachings a sacred epistemology and ethics that would take their own (albeit crowning) place in universal philosophy and theology.[27] Crucially, they both took pains to present the work as a new canon, speaking to the present yet ultimately above the passage of time.

Even before the notebooks' publication, sensitive scholars noted that Rav Kook's ideas could be presented through other frames. An extraordinary reckoning with, and remapping of, the Nazir's own map was provided by Yonina Dison in a 1990 monograph, in which she took apart the hundreds of passages comprising the first three volumes of *Orot Ha-Qodesh* edited by the Nazir, and reconstructed them into four projected volumes of her own, organized around four clusters of images: restoration and light emerging from destruction and darkness; the upward movement of all things; the spark of holiness hidden in every aspect of creation; and the complementarity of seeming opposites. All, she argued, reflect a wedding of intellect to imagination, and aim towards *hishtavut*, a moral-metaphysical equanimity in which all of existence is joined.[28] Smadar Sherlo, on the publication of the notebooks from which the Nazir was working, drew attention to the profoundly experiential dimensions of Rav Kook's thought, and suggested her own set

25 For a remarkable and deeply consequential study of Zvi Yehudah's editorial craft on the crucial subject of war, see Hanoch Ben-Pazi, "R. Abraham Isaac Kook and the Opening Passage of 'The War,'" *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2017): 256–278.

26 An important discussion of these latter figures and the ideological differences among them is Dov Schwartz, *Etgar u-Mashber be-Hug Ha-Rav Kook* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 2001). Tau's oral lectures are periodically published in a multivolume series entitled *Le-Emunat 'Itenu*. Aviner has published, inter alia, a four-volume encyclopedia of Rav Kook's writings and utterances, culled from the printed corpus, organized under three rubrics: "Torah," "the Jewish People," and "the Land of Israel"; Shlomo Aviner, *Halikhot Ha-Re'ayah*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem/Beit El: Sifriyat Beit El, 2005). "Torah" takes up the first two volumes, and is divided into: vol. 1—Torah Study, character, *Orakh Hayim*, army and war (!), *Yoreh De'ah*, and *Even Ha-'Ezer* (the third, fifth, and sixth being the names of the sections of *Shulhan 'Arukh* dealing with, respectively, daily ritual life, prayer, and festivals; ritual laws; domestic relations); vol. 2—education, rabbinate, literature, journalism, the revivial of spoken Hebrew, culture. Aviner's prolific writings are, like Tau's, crucial for understanding religious Zionism's recent decades.

27 Ha-Nazir's own deep engagement with a broad range of philosophical and religious literature, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, is made abundantly clear in his own work *Qol Ha-Nevu'ah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1970) as well as in the two volumes of his lectures on Rav Kook's thought, published in recent years as *Hug Ha-Re'ayah* (Jerusalem: Makhon Nezer David, 2015-18), though in the source notes he supplied to *Orot Ha-Qodesh* he cites only Jewish sources.

28 Yonina Dison, "Arba'ah Motivim be-Orot Ha-Qodesh," *Da'at* 24 (1990): 41–86.

of categories: *devequt*, prophecy, poetic creativity, and Messianic awareness.[29] In a deep sense, most every scholar working the ranges, meadows, and rivers of Rav Kook's corpus must draw a map of their own.

Rav Kook beyond the Academy

Unlike many of the figures regularly studied in philosophy or even theology departments, Rav Kook is the subject of intense interest well beyond the academy. It is hard to think of a comparable figure who has so deeply influenced contemporary politics and society not only through his institutional presence but his theology.[30] The only comparable figures would seem to be Ovadia Yosef, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, and Abraham Joshua Heschel. The contrasts are instructive: Rav Ovadia's influence qua thinker was not through theology but through halakhah; the Rebbe's influence on the "hard" politics of statecraft, though genuine, was limited, and never the program of a leading Israeli political movement or party; and profound as Abraham Joshua Heschel's influence on American Jewish liberalism has been and remains, that particular ethos emerged without him and his thought has not seemed to shape its own political choices.

Rav Kook's thought is itself the subject of rich and consequential discussion beyond the academy and in traditionalist Religious Zionism—one need only invoke the names of contemporary figures such as Shlomo Aviner, Zvi Tau, Yair Cherqi, to name a few—yet only some of that work will be reflected here, even as this work is meant to be, among other things, an intervention in conversations on Rav Kook among his more traditionalist readers who engage with academic research.[31] These dichotomies are not hard and fast, and there are marvelous examples of more traditionalist readings of Rav Kook that are deeply informed by historical context—such as the works of Yoel Bin-Nun and the remarkable writings of Bezalel Naor.

While traditionalist figures tend not to account for the absence of academic works in their repertoires, I think it appropriate and only fair to lay out those figures' absence here. I will discuss my own reasons for my choosing to work here in a vein different from theirs at the close of this Introduction.

Academic Approaches

Surveying academic research on Rav Kook means looking at two distinct but related questions: first, the methods adopted, texts surveyed, and questions being asked of the

29 Smadar Sherlo (Cherlow), *Tzadiq Yesod 'Olam: Ha-Shelihut Ha-Sodit ve-Ha-Havayah Ha-Mistit shel Ha-Rav Kook* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2012). See also her article, "Tzadiq Yesod 'Olam—Shelihuto Ha-Mistit shel Ha-Rav Kook," *Da'at* 49 (2002): 99–135.

30 My thanks for that observation to Prof. Noah Feldman.

31 Readers looking for immersion in this other world of Rav Kook scholarship will find riches online in the RAMBISH Index at www.rambish.org.il and at asif.co.il.

materials; second, the categories, or characterization, that best capture his place on the horizon of Jewish thought.

Turning to the first: in an important article, Naamah Bindiger carefully presents the state of research into Rav Kook's writings and of the bibliographic record of his works.[32] She observes that while most twentieth-century scholarly studies of Rav Kook focused on the philosophical dimensions of his corpus, and large thematic questions such as his Messianism, theosophy, relationship to Zionism and secular culture, the century also saw much discussion of the textual sources of his thought, and principally, the relative weights to be assigned to philosophy and Kabbalah. The past twenty years or so have seen a shift in inquiry towards other questions—such as his relationship to feminism and his significance for contemporary political sociology. These years have also seen, with the publication of many of his works in their original form, concentrated study of the editing and composition of his work, and of the development of his thought over time.

I have contended for some while that we still have no comprehensive bibliography even of Rav Kook's published works, let alone of the many unpublished works still in manuscript: most in avowedly sectarian and secretive hands.[33] (Bindiger differs with my bibliographical assessment in some respects, but concurs that the bibliographies we currently have are not well coordinated in terms of dates or different versions of items.) Recent years have seen some major developments here—the publication of hitherto unavailable manuscripts (a number of which figure prominently in this work) and the very significant scholarly discussions of the state of Rav Kook's corpus and the history of its many editorial layers.[34] This volume, inter alia, hopes to add to the basic bibliographic spadework still necessary to put Rav Kook studies onto a firmer footing.

Turning to the important question of the development of Rav Kook's thought, Bindiger discusses how several writers, this one included, have tried to differentiate

32 Naamah Bindiger, "Heqer Hitpathut Hagut Ha-Rav Kook—Tashtit Bibliografit ve-Temunah Mehqar 'Adqanit,'" forthcoming in *'Alei Sefer* 30. My thanks to Dr. Bindiger for sharing her article with me prior to its publication. Her article is a trove of references and will be helpful to all researchers in the field.

33 The first, and, for many years, only full bibliography of materials then appearing in print was published in 1938 by Yizhak Werfel (Refael) in volume one of the Rav Kook memorial volume, *Azkarah le-Nishmat Ha-Ga'on Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook: Qovetz Torani Mada'i*, ed. J. L. Fishman (Maimon) (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1937–1938); it was supplemented by Moshe Zvi Manekin (Neriah) in *Be-Mishor* 1, no. 33 (1940): 10–11 with Werfel (Refael)'s comments therein on p. 11. One small item Refael misses from the period under discussion here is Rav Kook's comments to Aderet's discussion of halakhic aspects of circumcision appearing in *Knesset Ha-Gedolah* 2 (1890): 33–34. The bibliography in Frankel's encyclopedia article is very helpful. For discussion of the pitfalls that this state of affairs has put in the way even of excellent scholars, see Jonatan Meir, "'Al Shir Ganuz shel Ha-Rav Kook ve-Naftulei Pirsumo," *Da'at* 55 (2005): 165–168.

34 On some of the political stakes involved here, see Avinoam Rosenak, "Mi Mefahed me-Qevatzim Genuzim shel Ha-Rav Kook?," *Tarbitz* 69, no. 2 (2000): 257–291. See also Uriel Eytam, "Sqirat Kitvei He-Hagut shel Ha-Re'ayah," *Tzohar* 18 (2004): 19–38, who persuasively argues that the *Shemonah Qevatzim* date only from 1910 onwards.

between periods, and in particular, the difference between his decades before and after his move to Palestine. She notes, correctly in my view, that each feature of Rav Kook's thought deserves to be studied as its own developmental phase, an approach helpful for understanding any number of movements and thinkers.

Turning to the second question, of how best to characterize Rav Kook's place in the landscape of Jewish thought, Mordechai Pachter in a very helpful 2001 article discerned three sets of studies: on Rav Kook qua philosopher, qua mystic, and as a figure in between.[35] In the first camp he placed above all Benjamin Ish-Shalom, along with Eliezer Goldman, Nathan Rotenstreich, and Hugo Bergmann.[36] The leading exemplar of the second in Pachter's scheme is Yosef Avivi,[37] along with Scholem,[38] Hillel Zeitlin, and

35 Mordechai Pachter, "Ha-Tashtit Ha-Qabbalit shel Tefisat Ha-Emunah ve-Ha-Kefirah be-Mishnat Ha-Rav Kook," *Da'at* 47 (2001): 69–100,

36 My own sense is that this is something of a misreading of Bergmann (1883–1975), who, though very much a philosopher was also much more, such that his engagement with Rav Kook was part of a broader spiritual quest, of which philosophy was just a part. I hope to return to Bergmann's relationship to Rav Kook someday; see for now his excellent essay on Rav Kook from his *Faith and Reason in Modern Jewish Thought*, trans. Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken, 1961), 121–141. He was, I believe, the first to characterize Rav Kook's thought as panentheist, in an article on Rav Kook's views on death and immortality, in *Haaretz*, December 12, 1948, later republished in his volume *Hogim u-Ma'aminim* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1959), 103–111. It is worth noting that Bergmann's final, deathbed writings were on Rav Kook's understanding of immortality, see his posthumous *Toldot Ha-Filosofiyah He-Hadashah: Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1977), 239–240 and Moshe Barash's prefatory comments to that volume.

37 Yosef Avivi, starting with his "Meqor Ha-Orot," *Tzohar* 1 (Fall 2000): 93–111, argued that the new publications proved his long-held thesis that Rav Kook is essentially, and indeed almost exclusively, an interpreter of Lurianism. He has most recently published the monumental *Qabbalat Ha-Re'ayah*, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Tzvi, 2018), in which he walks through the vast corpus of Rav Kook's writings to mine a consistent teaching on core Kabbalistic concepts such as emanation. This work appeared after the present work was largely completed, but I have tried to take as much notice of it as I can. Suffice it to say that his stunning erudition and astonishing acuity do indeed establish the overwhelmingly Kabbalistic provenance of Rav Kook's thought; at the same time, a richer conceptualization of what mysticism and philosophy respectively are trying to do, and the different kinds of knowledge and experience they offer, is needed to assess Rav Kook's thought, along with a nuanced appreciation of his historical as well as textual contexts. For a summary of Avivi's views, see his "Aqdamot le-Qabbalat Ha-Re'ayah," in *Mah Ahavti Toratekhah*, ed. Yitzhak Recanati and Shaul Barth (Jerusalem: Alon Shvut: 2014), 153–181, available online along with many of his other writings on a range of Kabbalistic subjects at http://yosefavivi.blogspot.com/.

38 See Scholem's brief but significant remarks in "Hirhurim 'al Efsharutah shel Mistikah Yehudit be-Yameinu," 71–83. Scholem writes half-jokingly in a letter of 1961 that he is teaching a course in Jewish mysticism from Adam onwards and doesn't know if the end point is Buber, Rav Kook, or the Lubavitcher rebbe—see Gershom Scholem, *Briefe*, vol. 2, *1948–1970*, ed. Thomas Sparr (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995), 81. More broadly, for several important studies, see Uriel Barak, "Kabbalah versus Philosophy: Rabbi Avraham Itzhak Kook's Critique of the Spiritual World of Franz Rosenzweig," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 23, no. 1

Jacob Agus (to whom we would today add Jonathan Garb, Haviva Pedaya, and Smadar Sherlo, to name just a few).[39] And in the third category he put the majority of academic students of Rav Kook, such as Tamar Ross, Yosef Ben-Shlomo, Avinoam Rosenak, Shalom Rosenberg, and Yoel Bin-Nun who see him as a mix of philosopher and mystic.[40] (One category Pachter did not mention was the study of halakhah.)[41]

As will become clear, I would place myself in this last camp.[42] I hope to show through this work that much of the internal scaffolding of Rav Kook's mystical teaching derived

(2015): 27–59, and Moshe Idel, "Abraham Abulafia, Gershom Scholem ve-Rabbi David Cohen ('Ha-Nazir')," in "The Eliezer Schweid Jubilee Volume," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 19 (2005): 819–834.

39 See Sherlo, *Tzadiq Yesod 'Olam*; for a summary, see her article, "Tzadiq Yesod 'Olam," 99–135. Haviva Pedaya, "Eretz Zeman u-Maqom—Apocalypsot shel Sof ve-Apokalypsah shel Hathalah," in *Eretz Yisrael be-Hagut Yehudit be-Me'ah Ha-'Esrim*, ed. Aviezer Ravitzky (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Tzvi, 2004), 560–624, 585–602. Jonathan Garb, "Ha-Re'ayah Kook—Hogeh Le'umi o Meshorer Misti?," *Da'at* 54 (2004): 69–96; idem, "Rabbi Kook and His Sources: From Kabbalistic Historiosophy to National Mysticism," in *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Babi-Baha'i Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 77–96, idem, *The Chosen Will Become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) and other works of his referenced throughout this volume. See also Elliot Wolfson, "Secrecy, Apophasis and Atheistic Faith in the Teachings of Rav Kook," in *Negative Theology as Jewish Modernity*, ed. Michael Fagenblatt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 131-160.

40 Yoel Bin-Nun, *Ha-Maqor Ha-Kaful: Hashra'ah ve-Samkhut be-Mishnat Ha-Rav Kook* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 2014). In addition to the works referred to in the course of this work, see Yosef Ben-Shlomo, *Shirat Ha-Hayim: Peraqim be-Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Kook* (Tel Aviv: Misrad Ha-Bitahon/Broadcast University, 1989). See Rosenberg's "Mavo' le-Haguto shel Ha-Re'ayah" and his "Haguto shel Ha-Re'ayah Kook beyn Yahadut le-Tarbut Kelalit," in *Yovel Orot: Haguto shel Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook*, ed. Benjamin Ish-Shalom and Shalom Rosenberg (Jerusalem: Sifiyat Eliner, 1988).

41 See Neriah Gutel, *Hadashim gam Yeshanim: Bi-Netivei Mishnato Ha-Hilkhatit-Hagutit shel Ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes, 2005) and Avinoam Rosenak, *Ha-Halakhah Ha-Nevi'ut* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes, 2007); and, more briefly, his "'Torat Eretz Yisrael' Ha-Nevu'it be-Mishnat Ha-Re'ayah Kook," in Ravitzky, *Eretz Yisrael be-Hagut Ha-Yehudit be-Me'ah Ha-'Esrim*, 26–70. An interesting attempt at a "multi-layered" approach to Rav Kook, integrating theology, halakhah, and some historical context on specific issues, is Moshe Falukh, "Nitzotzot she-Eyn ba-Hem Mamash: Yahaso Ha-Haguti ve-Ha-Hilkhati shel Ha-Re'ayah Kook le-Hiloni ve-la-Hilun: Keriy'ah Rav-Shikhvatit," in Horvitz, Herr, Silman, and Cordinali, eds., *Sefer Zikaron le-Professor Zev Falk zl*, 89–122.

42 Pachter also notes that there are some who see him as primarily a poet, such as Marvin Fox and Avraham Regelson. There is very little work that looks at Rav Kook in terms of psychology and psychoanalysis, though Hanokh Ben-Pazi has begun to discuss Rav Kook as part of a larger project on psychoanalysis and modern Jewish thought. See his "Ha-Yitzriyut eitzel Ha-Rav Kook," in *Sihot 'im Ha-Yetzer Ha-Ra'*, ed. Asa Qeidar (Tel Aviv: Yedi'ot/Hemed, 2007), 155–163. It also bears noting that there are few genuinely comparative studies of Rav Kook, for a brief exception, see Margaret Chatterjee, "Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Sri Aurobindo: Towards a Comparison," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, ed. Hananya Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994),

from the philosophical tradition. And like some others I am trying to place Rav Kook in historical context, of modern Jewish history and the larger intellectual history of modernity.[43] He was by no means the first Kabbalist whose ideas emerged out of deep engagement with philosophy.[44] But the ways in which he did so, in both style and substance were in many ways unprecedented, both in his ideas and in his intense dialectical engagement with the social and political currents of his time.

Biographical Research

A long-standing feature of much scholarly study of Rav Kook has been its pronounced ahistorical character. This is due not only to the traditionalist leanings of many of his interpreters, but perhaps more importantly, to the fact that his theological writings were edited and published by his disciples precisely in order to blur their historicity—chiefly as a way to present readers with a coherent worldview and, invariably, blunt the edges of his theological radicalism. Biographical volumes by his traditionalist disciples have tended towards hagiography, even if not nearly as much as in works about comparable figures in ultra-Orthodoxy.[45]

243–266, though all of her quotes from Rav Kook are from sources in translation. Another is Jack Cohen's book-length comparison of Rav Kook with Mordecai Kaplan, *Guides for an Age of Confusion* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).

43 Briefly to anticipate some of what I will have to say later on: the respective proportions of philosophy and Kabbalah in Rav Kook's writings are, of course, a major bone of contention among scholarly interpreters; this was most clearly exemplified in the significant disagreements between Yosef Avivi and Benjamin Ish-Shalom, with the former arguing for the primacy of Kabbalah in general, and Moshe Hayim Luzzatto's writings in particular, as the chief framework of Rav Kook's thought, and the latter arguing for the significance of philosophy, which I will discuss at greater length in coming chapters. See Avivi's "Historiyah Tzorekh Gevohah," in *Sefer Ha-Yovel li-Khvod Mordechai Breuer*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher (Jerusalem: Aqademon, 1992), 709–771 and Ish-Shalom's response "Beyn Rav Kook li-Spinoza ve-Goethe," in *Qolot Rabim: Sefer Ha-Ziqaron le-Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer*, vol. 13 of *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Rachel Elior and Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1996), 525–556. Suffice it to say for now, that our reading, or unearthing, of these early writings, will show both that Luzzatto is indeed indispensable for a proper understanding of Rav Kook's major writings, and that the philosophical tradition provides the infrastructure for many of his ideas. Avivi's crucial contention that Rav Kook systematically offers his own reading and terminological reworking of the Lurianic structure of emanations (*derekh ha-atzilut*) seems accurate to this reader; yet that too seems but one facet of Rav Kook's thought, not least since the publication of the *Qevatzim*.

44 For a very helpful discussion, see Sandra Valabregue, "Philosophy, Heresy and Kabbalah's Counter-Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 109, no. 2 (2016): 233-256.

45 A lengthy and extremely nuanced exploration of the historiographical and ethical issues involved in the editing and publication of modern rabbinic writings by historians on the one hand and hagiographers on the other, is presented by Jacob J. Schacter, "Facing the Truths of History," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 8 (1998–1999): 200–276, and letters to the editor in subsequent issues of that journal.

To this day we lack a full-fledged scholarly biography of Rav Kook, though recent years have seen a scholarly "thickening" of some of the context in which he lived, thought, and wrote.[46] An invaluable starting point, though not as well known as it should be, is the lengthy entry by Aryeh Frankel in the *Encyclopedia of Religious Zionism*, which offers a

46 One significant development in Rav Kook studies has been Dov Schwartz's intense and illuminating focus in a series of books and articles on Rav Kook's "circle," that is, his son, Zvi Yehudah, his apostle and editor David Cohen (aka "The Nazir"), and his mystical soul-mate Ya'aqov Moshe Harlap. See his *Ha-Tzionut Ha-Datit beyn Higayon li-Meshihiyut* (Tel Aviv: 'Am 'Oved, 1999), which forcefully argues for the centrality not only of Nazir's editorial hand but his philosophical perspectives as well. Benjamin Ish-Shalom forcefully, and, to this writer, compellingly, criticized Schwartz's contention that Rav Kook's writings are best, and perhaps only to be, understood via the readings of his disciples. See his review of Schwartz, "Tzionut Datit beyn Apologiyah le-Hitmodedut," *Cathedra* 90 (1999): 145–149. Moreover, Schwartz's definition of the "circle" excludes all of the figures discussed in the pages of this dissertation, who were children during this period; in other words, he defines Rav Kook's first four decades out of the discussion a priori. Another, important work of Schwartz's, especially valuable for its availability in English, is his *The Religious Genius in Rabbi Kook's Thought: National "Saint"?* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014); we will have more to say on this work later on.

Smadar Sherlo (Cherlow) has integrated two trends in Rav Kook studies of recent years, that of looking at his circle and of reading him as primarily a mystic: see in brief her "Hug Ha-Re'ayah ke-Havurah Mistit," *Tarbitz* 74, no. 2 (2005): 261–303.

An attempt at mapping Rav Kook's circle is the volume by Neriah Gutel, *Mekhutavei Re'ayah* (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, 2000), a listing of Rav Kook's correspondents, along with some biographical and other materials. Gutel offers a wealth of information; at the same time, because he lists only those correspondents who appear in Rav Kook's published correspondence, this work does not provide as full a picture as one would hope for. Indeed, Jonatan Meir has argued in several richly documented studies that the notion of Rav Kook's "circle," if it is to be meaningful at all, must be expanded to include such figures as Yosef Hayim Brenner, S. Y. Agnon, Hillel Zeitlin, Yosef Zvi Rimon, A. Z. Rabinowitz, Hugo Bergmann, and others outside the rabbinic ambit as such.

Letters to Rav Kook by leading rabbinic figures have been gathered in Ben-Zion Shapira, ed., *Igrot La-Re'ayah*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Makhon Ha-Ratzyah Kook ztz"l, 1990). This collection explicitly aims to show that Rav Kook was an honored member of the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox rabbinic fraternity. It succeeds at that, but one cannot help noting that many, many of the letters therein are addressed to him in his capacity as chief rabbi, asking for help with such matters as charitable allocations and immigration certificates. (An interesting and important exception is Hayim Ozer Grodzinski, whose correspondence with Rav Kook is marked by unmistakable regard and respect.)

Rav Kook's letters of approbation to various volumes of rabbinic literature are listed and in some cases are to be found in Ari Shvat and Zuriel Halamish, eds., *Haskamot Ha-Re'ayah* (Jerusalem: Beit Ha-Rav, 2017). I will have more to say about his haskamot in this period in chapter three. Marc B. Shapiro has detailed the omissions of Rav Kook's haskamot from many reprinted editions of various works in his *Changing the Immutable: How Orthodox Judaism Rewrites its History* (Oxford: Littman, 2015). For a brief but fascinating excursus on haskamot as a genre, and discussion of how and why things get left out of different editions for different reasons, including some discussion of Rav Kook, see Avishai Elbaum, "Shinuyim be-Haskamot," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 38, no. 1 (Tishrei 5758): 34–38.

nearly month-by-month account of Rav Kook's public career from his arrival in Palestine onwards, and devotes proportionally more space than most to his pre-Palestine life.[47] Yet even there, his first thirty-eight years are dispensed with in some ten pages. Other essential works are Yossi Avneri's invaluable, unpublished dissertation, as well as his published articles, and the work of Menahem Friedman.[48]

We are dependent for biographic information above all on the works of J. L. (Fishman) Maimon and Moshe Zvi Neriah, especially the latter's many volumes. Maimon (1875–1962), aside from his formidable public and political achievements as a leader of Religious Zionism and a high government official, was a richly productive writer, researcher, and editor in his own right and knew, worked (and occasionally locked horns) with Rav Kook for decades, since their first meeting in 1908.[49] Neriah (1913–1996), a disciple of Rav Kook from 1930 on and the founder of the Bnei Aqiva network of yeshivot, devoted much of his long career to anthologizing Rav Kook and gathering much primary material in a series of volumes about which we will have more to say as we proceed.[50] Briefly, Neriah's works, a decades-long labor of love, are undoubtedly hagiographic, and yet they gather so much material that they transcend their own flaws; moreover, his instincts about how to understand his master seem to this writer often on the mark. Like many hagiographers, Neriah had the defects of his virtues, that is, his intense reverence for his subject led him to dig up most every scrap of information he could, which he then assembled in volumes sorely lacking in historical, and certainly critical, perspective. Still, Neriah's volumes are

47 *Entziklopedia shel Ha-Tzionut Ha-Datit* (1983), s.v. "Kook, Avraham Yitzhak."

48 Yosef Avneri, "Ha-Re'ayah Kook ke-Rabbah shel Eretz Yisrael" (PhD diss., Bar-Ilan University, 1989); Menahem Friedman, *Hevrah va-Dat: Ha-Ortodoksiyah Ha-Lo-Tzionit be-Eretz Yisrael, 1918–1936* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Tzvi, 1988). Two helpful steps towards providing academically informed biography are Avinoam Rosenak, *Ha-Rav Kook* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2006) and the present writer's *Rav Kook*, and the revised, Hebrew, edition, *Rav Kook: Mabat Hadash* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 2021). For a synopsis of that volume, see my "Revelation and Redemption: Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, 1865–1935," in *Makers of Jewish Modernity*, ed. J. Picard et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 92–107. For an early but still significant treatment of the scholarly and political dimensions of this willful hiding of Rav Kook's manuscripts, see Rosenak, "Mi Mefahed me-Qevatzim Genuzim shel Ha-Rav Kook." A recent journalistic treatment of the controversies surrounding Rav Kook's manuscripts is Yehudah Yifrah, "Ke-Domen 'al Pnei Ha-Sadeh," *Makor Rishon*, Shabbat Supplement, July 25, 2017, 10–15.

49 Maimon's chief biographical work on Rav Kook was the lengthy essay he published in 1937 in the Rav Kook memorial volume, which set the outlines for most every Rav Kook biography or hagiography to follow. A full-length biography of Maimon was written by his daughter—see Geula Bat-Yehudah (Refael), *Ha-Rav Maimon be-Dorotav* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1979). Maimon founded Mossad Ha-Rav Kook in 1937.

50 A biography of Neriah, including his years with Rav Kook and up to his founding of the first, and flagship, Bnei Aqiva yeshiva in Kefar Ha-Ro'e (the latter named for Rav Kook) is Tzila Bar-Eli, *Shahar Oro: Ha-Rav Moshe Zvi Neriah ztz"l* (Jerusalem/Psagot: n.p., 2002). See also a collection of interviews and reminiscences, *Ner le-Neriah* (Haifa: Yeshivat Pirhei Aharon of Kiryat Shmuel, 1996).

an invaluable resource, and in the coming chapters we will try to sift through their quasi-hagiographic elements to draw a reasonably credible and critical picture. Briefly, while Maimon and Neriah see Rav Kook as riding above the turbulences of his times, I see him amid them.[51]

There has been some, but not too much, scholarly biography. Jacob Agus devoted the first half of his 1946 volume to Rav Kook's Eastern European life, but only as it touched upon nationalism.[52] In addition to his dissertation, Yossi Avneri has written a number of remarkably important, detailed studies to Rav Kook's public career in Jaffa and later as chief rabbi; focusing less on the thought and more on the life (above all on Rav Kook's Jerusalem years)—work which is yet (tragically) unpublished.[53] Some other scholars, while not writing biographies as such, have taken a more developmental approach to Rav Kook's thought itself, such as Hagi ben Artzi in his study of key episodes in the juristic elements of Rav Kook's career, though his study devotes almost no attention to Rav Kook's years as an active jurist in Eastern Europe.[54] Reuven Gerber also took a developmental approach, tracing one dimension of Rav Kook's thought, what he terms "the revolution of illumination" towards a progressively spiritual (as opposed to narrowly national) perspective.[55] He devotes only a few pages to Rav Kook's pre-Palestine years. Michal Lanir has devoted considerably more space to those years, but almost entirely in terms of Rav Kook's writings

51 The various biographies by Efraim Zoref, Ya'aqov Even-Hen (Edelstein), Simha Raz, and Shmuel Avidor are, sadly, unsourced, and all largely structured along the lines laid down by Maimon in his pioneering essay, though some, particularly Even-Hen's and Avidor's, offer richer detail derived from their own researches. Even-Hen (1928–1997) was longtime editor of *Mabu'a*, a task he took up at the urging of Rebbe Binyomin (Joshua Radler-Feldman)—this was recounted to me in a telephone conversation with his widow, Nehama Edelstein, September 26, 2006; it may be that Rebbe Binyomin was one of his sources for more intimate details of Rav Kook's life. He does not source his book (which was posthumously completed by Yehudah Azrieli), yet he regularly offers prosaic details bearing verisimilitude, and there is, at least to this reader, a lucid and at times faintly ironic sensibility lurking just below the surface of his seemingly hagiographic prose.

52 Jacob B. Agus, *Banner of Jerusalem* (New York: Bloch, 1946). Agus's work on Rav Kook has long been neglected, though his Hebrew essays have recently been made good use of by Smadar Sherlo (Cherlow).

53 See inter alia Avneri's "Ha-Re'ayah Kook ke-Rabbah Ha-Rashi shel Eretz Yisrael." See also Yossi Avneri, "Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, Rabbah shel Yafo (1904–1914)," *Cathedra* 37 (1985): 49–82; idem, "Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook ve-She'elat Yahasei Yehudim-'Aravim be-Eretz Yisrael, 1904–1935," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 2, no. 1 (1990): 331–338.

54 Hagi Ben-Artzi, "Ha-Re'ayah Kook ke-Posek—Yesodot Hadshaniyyim be-Pesikato shel Ha-Rav Kook" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 2004). On the other hand, his master's thesis, which I discuss in chapter five, is devoted precisely to this period and in particular to Rav Kook's writings on nationalism.

55 Reuven Gerber, *Mahapekhat Ha-Hearah: Darko Ha-Ruhanit shel Ha-Re'ayah Kook* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik/Ha-Sifriyah Ha-Tzionit, 2005).

on nationalism from the turn of the century;[56] the same is true for Eliezer Goldman's pioneering study of some of those writings, Rav Kook's essays in *Ha-Peles*.[57] I hope to show that those writings are themselves the result of a long process which involved much more than nationalism—and indeed until 1901 hardly involved it at all—the recognition of which demands that they, and the works which came after, be read in a different light.[58] Yoel Bin-Nun in his brilliant, penetrating study of Rav Kook's thought has also reckoned with shifts in his thinking over time.[59]

Avinoam Rosenak published a brief, yet significant, biography which makes a genuine contribution to the field, not least for studying Rav Kook in a chronological framework and making ample use of the materials published in recent years.[60] And this writer has tried his hand at that as well, in a brief book encompassing Rav Kook's life, thought, and legacy.[61]

The Long-Missing Early Decades in Rav Kook's Corpus

Virtually all of Rav Kook's best-known and canonical writings date from 1904 onward, and the range of ideas therein are taken as the expression of his thought.[62] Yet throughout the years preceding his move to Palestine at age thirty-eight he was writing

56 Michal Lanir, *Ha-Re'ayah Kook ve-Ha-Tzionut—Gilgulah shel Tiqvah* (Tel Aviv: Safra, 2015). Chapter two is devoted to the Eastern European years.

57 Eliezer Goldman's essay "Tzionut Hilonit, Te'udat Yisrael ve-Takhlit Ha-Torah—Ma'amarei Rav Kook be-'Ha-Peles': 5661–5664" first appeared in *Da'at* 11 (1983): 103–126, and is reprinted in his collection *Mehqarim ve-'Iyunim* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes, 2000), 159–182. Our pagination in citations follows the latter.

58 Indeed, Goldman intuited some of this, and without the benefit of most of the most significant early writings, which were yet unpublished while he was writing.

59 Bin-Nun, *Ha-Maqor Ha-Kaful*.

60 Rosenak, *Ha-Rav Kook*. As part of a series aimed at the general reader the book dispenses with detailed scholarly apparatus as it covers a great deal of ground in, given the magnitude of the subject, a mere 275 pages. Nonetheless, Rosenak manages to offer an important interpretation of Rav Kook's life and career, particularly in his calling attention to the ups and downs of Rav Kook's attitudes towards halakhah over time. The period covered by this dissertation is covered by Rosenak in a few, albeit perceptive, pages (11–31), and, perhaps understandably given the compass of his volume, he does not discuss the many works that are my subject here.

61 Mirsky, *Rav Kook*. Readers looking for a summary of that volume can turn to my essay, "Revelation and Redemption: Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook, 1865–1935," in *Makers of Jewish Modernity*, ed. J. Picard et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 92–107.

62 I am, of course, referring to the series of volumes published by Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, *Orot*, *Orot Ha-Qodesh*, and *Orot Ha-Teshuvah*, which, by virtue of their distinctive white bindings, have come colloquially to be known as "Ha-Shas Ha-Lavan" (The White Talmud). Two significant works in that series, the commentaries to the prayer book *'Olat Re'ayah* and *Mussar Avikha*, as well as much of his halakhic writing, all of which we will discuss below, were in fact largely composed during his time in Eastern Europe. However, the manner in which they were published deliberately deflects attention from the time of their composition, as we will see. Rav Kook's halakhic writings of this period are published with his other responsa, and

continuously, in various genres: halakhic responsa and Talmudic novellae, commentaries, essays, poetry, and spiritual diaries. Most of these efforts were not published until well after his death in 1935, and many only in the last few decades; some yet remain in manuscript. For a long while his early writings generated little scholarly attention, in part because they do not reflect his mature thought in all its theological audacity, historiosophical sweep, psychological insight, and lyric power (and indeed at times make for plodding reading), and because a kind of (what we may call) Palestinocentrism has colored scholarship on Rav Kook both in and out of the academy. Indeed, Zvi Yehudah Kook gave explicit instruction to his disciples not to publish his father's pre-Palestine writings.[63] One likely explanation for this will be provided by one of this work's findings—that for most of his years in Eastern Europe, the Land of Israel simply was not a significant category in his father's thought. Within the academy, Rav Kook's place in the history of Zionism has largely overshadowed his work of this period; indeed even those scholars who paid attention to these writings focused almost exclusively on those concerning nationalism. The 2007 dissertation on which this book is based helped foster some change there.

Rav Kook and the Medieval Philosophical Tradition

While countless studies have investigated Rav Kook's relationship to the Kabbalah and various currents of modern philosophy, much less has been written about his relationship to the medieval philosophical tradition, aside from his relationship to Ha-Levi's *Kuzari*.[64]

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with their dates, but they are in a different category from his theological writings, which are the very heart of the discourse around him.

63 See the introduction to Elisha Aviner [Langauer] and David Landau, eds., *Ma'amarei Ha-Re'ayah* (Jerusalem: n.p., 1984). The lengths to which Zvi Yehudah went here are shown in his preface to his edition of his father's commentary to the Siddur (Prayer book) *'Olat Re'ayah*, first published in 1939, only a portion of which was written by his father as straightforward commentary. The vast majority of the printed volumes is composed of excerpts from *'Eyn Ayah*, the aggadic commentary, three-quarters of which was written in Eastern Europe, yet Zvi Yehudah notes in the introduction only that he "gathered and combined gleanings from scattered places in his (father's) manuscripts" (Zvi Yehudah Kook, ed., *'Olat Reiyah* [Jerusalem: Agudah le-Hotza'at Sifrei Ha-Re'ayah Kook zl, 1939–1949], 13. Repr. ed. 2015).

64 An early, significant exception was Lawrence Kaplan, "Rav Kook and the Jewish Philosophical Tradition," in *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*, ed. Lawrence Kaplan and David Shatz (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 41–77 and his "The Love of God in Maimonides and Rav Kook," *Judaism* 43, no. 3 (1994): 227–239. Rav Kook's affinities with, and divergences from, the harmonizing thrust of the medieval philosophical tradition is taken up by David Shatz, "The Integration of Torah and Culture: Its Scope and Limits in the Thought of Rav Kook," in *Hazon Nahum*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Jeffrey S. Gurock (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1997), 529–556. See also Yehudah Mirsky, "Ha-Rambam ve-Ha-Re'ayah Kook: Behinah Mehudeshet," *Iggud* 1 (2008): 397–405 and Uriel Barak, "Ha-Hashpa'ah Ha-Me'atzevet shel Tiur Madregat Ha-Nevu'ah Ha-Rishonah be-Moreh Nevukhim 'al Tefisat Athalta de-Ge'ulah be-Hug Ha-Re'ayah," *Da'at* 64–66 (2009): 361–415. See also James A. Diamond, *Maimonides and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

We will argue that this philosophical infrastructure affords helpful insight into the later ecstatic, mystical writings for which Rav Kook is most known and celebrated; a vivid example we will trace is the interplay between intellect, imagination, and feeling. His preoccupation with this theme, it seems, grows out of his interest in the revival of prophecy. That prophecy was of great interest to him is well known; what we will show is that this began at a very early stage, in his early twenties, and that his attempted ascent to prophecy began along the rungs laid out by Maimonidean philosophy.[65] This concern with Maimonides's doctrine of prophecy grew over time into far-reaching explorations of human personhood. We will see in particular how working out the respective relations of intellect and imagination, as laid out in Maimonidean doctrine, led him to substitute feeling for imagination in his understanding of the structure of the soul, and how this gave rise to the emergence of his thinking in terms of subjectivity, his own and that of others, as a point of access to God.

While, as we will see, he became engrossed in Kabbalah in his early twenties, in his early writings he is very much a latter-day inheritor of the medieval philosophical tradition as transmitted via Maimonides, Isaac Arama, and, in modified form, by the Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah. These writings also shed light on the intellectual climate of his times, including the abiding presence of the medieval philosophical tradition amid traditional circles in Eastern Europe, a feature of that cultural climate which has not received its due in treatments of the period.[66] This perspective on Rav Kook lends its own bit of weight to Moshe Idel's argument that Jewish intellectual history is best served by what he dubs a "panoramic perspective," which recognizes that thinkers have at their disposal a range of literary and other traditions on which to draw as they work out their spiritual preoccupations, some of them perennials of Jewish thought, others peculiar to

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Press, 2014), who devotes an entire chapter to Rav Kook's relationship to Maimonides, which we will discuss in chapter 5.

For an early bibliography of secondary writings on Rav Kook and Maimonides, see Yisrael Ya'aqov Dienstag, "Ha-Rambam be-Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Kook ztz"l: Bibliografiyah," in *Sefer Refa'el,* ed. Yosef Mowshowitz (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 2000), 135–138.

65 On the restoration of prophecy as a significant theme in Rav Kook's mature writings, see Eliezer Schweid, *Neviim le-'Amam u-le-Enoshut*: *Nevu'ah u-Neviim be-Hagut Ha-Yehudit shel Ha-Me'ah Ha-'Esrim* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University/Magnes Press, 1999), 190–214; Schweid traces this theme in the works of a number of thinkers, including Hermann Cohen, Ahad Ha-Am, M.Y. Berdyczewsky, H. N. Bialik, A. D. Gordon, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Rabbi Leo Baeck, and Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

The place of prophecy in Rav Kook's halakhic writings is the subject of Avinoam Rosenak's dissertation, "Ha-Filosofiyah shel Ha-Halakhah be-Mishnato shel Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1997); see, in brief, his "'Torat Eretz Yisrael' Ha-Nevu'it," 26–70; for a different treatment, see Gutel, *Hadashim gam Yeshanim*.

66 A happy exception is Adam B. Shear, "Jewish Enlightenment beyond Western Europe," in *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 252–279.

their times or personalities.[67] I will show Rav Kook drawing, at times self-consciously, on this range of traditions in counterpoint to developments in his own time and place, as well as out of what we can think of as the immanent transmission and interpretation of texts and ideas within the traditions themselves.

The Eastern European Writings: Towards Expressivism and the Subject

In later years Rav Kook found himself, by his own admission, unable to write systematic theology, even if, as Avivi argues, a genuine sytem of Lurianic Kabbalah appears from within the great lattices of his ideas.[68] By contrast, in many of these early writings he regularly works at developing well-ordered structures of ideas. It may well be that his later difficulties with constructing a system were a reflection of the nature of the ideas with which he was contending—namely, that that inability is correlative to the expansive, expressive subjectivity towards which he moved.[69] Moreover, in his case, discovering his subjectivity also meant acknowledging the splits and fissures of his own soul, the dialectical resolution of which became a defining preoccupation of his for decades to come.

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67 Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 9–15. Much of Idel's argument here is with Gershom Scholem's depiction of most every development in the history of Kabbalah as a dialectical reaction to that which immediately preceded it.

68 See the well-known introductory comments of David Cohen (*Ha-Nazir*) to Rav Kook's magnum opus, *Orot Ha-Qodesh*, which Cohen compiled and edited from a number of Rav Kook's spiritual diaries. A fuller version of the conversations between the two in 1922 regarding the project and the forging of a system out of Rav Kook's thought, is presented in Cohen's own diaries, reprinted in his memorial volume *Nezir Ehav*, vol. 1, 286–288. Interestingly, therein at 301, describing his posthumous editing of the diaries, he notes it was Ya'aqov Moshe Harlap who most pressed for editorial censorship of Rav Kook's more audacious theological ideas, perhaps reflecting his own difficult experience around the publication of *Orot* in 1920, about which I wrote in *Rav Kook*, 167–169.

In a 1909 letter, Rav Kook, by way of explaining to his brother Dov the reason for the delay in the establishment of his yeshiva in Jaffa, says that on the material side, he is "no expert at all at financial matters. And on the spiritual side—the necessity for order, which also runs counter to my nature, as I love to influence and pour myself *onto every babe in the market and young man in the street* (Jer. 6:11, 9:20), if it were possible." See *Igrot*, 1:261.

Notwithstanding the force of Yosef Avivi's detailed argumentation that virtually all of Rav Kook's later theological writings are to be understood in terms of the highly structured framework of Lurianic mysticism as taught in the Lithuanian tradition, the aphoristic, experiential character of these writings cannot be denied.

69 At the same time, the extraordinary time and other pressures of his multifaceted rabbinical roles certainly afforded little time for more systematic writing. See, for instance, his 1907 letter to Yehiel Mikhel Tukoczinsky, expressing a wish that he might succeed Isaac Blazer as head of the Jerusalem *kollel*, and thus relieve "the public burden of (halakhic) ruling . . . and without the yoke of matters of rabbinate and ruling." See *Igrot*, 1:84. Apologizing for being busy is a staple of rabbinic correspondence; still this is striking for his seeking to leave his susbtantial position for the academic cloister.

An interesting parallel here—one that I will pursue throughout—is the trajectory of his exact contemporary and Volozhin classmate Micah Yosef Berdyczewski, *enfant terrible* of Hebrew letters, who in these years also progressed to a recognition of deep subjectivity, which he experienced as an unreconcilable break with tradition; we will see the two moving at times on parallel tracks, responding to similar *problematiques*, Berdyczewski accepting and even embracing rupture, and Rav Kook working to contain similar conflicts within the framework of a reinterpreted though still normative tradition.[70]

In Rav Kook's Eastern European writings, we see his passage towards Romantic nationalism, a movement across the arc described by Charles Taylor as the passage from the rational self towards the expressive subject; a detailed reconstruction of this arc is a major theme of the coming chapters.[71] In Taylor's account, key to the development of the cluster of events and ideas that we call modernity was the emergence of alternative moral sources to the premodern dispensation, and in particular, the dignity of rationality and the subjective self. Though the two differ, they are related as reflections of the essential goodness of nature, as realized in natural form and embedded in the human person. In what Taylor calls the "expressivist turn," most obviously associated with Rousseau, we open ourselves to nature within as once we opened ourselves to grace. This expressivism, a key facet, first of Romanticism and later of Modernism, is a kind of neo-Augustinianism, in which the truth is to be found deep within the inner self; yet if for the Bishop of Hippo God lay at the foundation, for modern philosophers of nature, at the base is the human person itself, as created by nature.[72] Even so, this expressivism certainly bears enough of the traces of its religious origin to serve as the basis for a reimagining of the religious life from, as it were, the bottom-up, in contrast to what one may call the top-down vector of the medieval philosophical tradition. Indeed, Neoplatonic philosophical and spiritual

70 This account of Berdyczewski draws on Avner Holzman, *El Ha-Qer'a she-ba-Lev: Micha Yosef Berdyczewsky, Shenot Ha-Tzemihah: 1887–1902* (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik/Tel Aviv University, 1995).

71 I am of course referring to Charles Taylor's landmark volume, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), as well to the discussion of expressivism in the first chapter of his *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). My thinking here also reflects Alain Touraine's discussion of what he characterizes as a "tension between reason and the subject" lying at the heart of modernity. See his *Critique of Modernity*, trans. David Macey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). I will have more to say on this later, particularly in chapter four, which discusses the interplay of intellect, imagination and feeling in Rav Kook's aggadah commentary *'Eyn Ayah*. Taylor's work has been criticized in Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 41–43, 299. He particularly disagrees with Taylor's seeing Locke as an exemplar of "the punctilious self," and more broadly sees in modernity a richer harvest of forms of selfhood than Taylor allows. These points do not, though, detract from Taylor's helpfulness for our purposes here.

72 One of the virtues of Taylor's formulation is its clarifying just which of the many meanings of Romanticism we are talking about; on this, see Arthur O. Lovejoy's classic 1924 essay "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," in his *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1948), 228, 253.

traditions played no small role in the development of Romanticism, as well as in German Idealism, mediated in part by Christian Kabbalah.[73] Leszek Kolakowski has shown just how deeply rooted what he characterizes as Hegel's philosophical eschatology is in the Neoplatonic tradition, the tradition which itself is so central to the history of Kabbalah.[74]

In turn, we see in Rav Kook an exemplar of the phenomenon that Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt called "multiple modernities"—the ways in which modern thinkers and movements radicalize extant tensions within premodern civilization in regularly surprising ways.[75] I will have more to say on this presently.

These same dynamics limned by Taylor are at work in Rav Kook's own development. In his youth he was, within the framework of traditional rabbinic culture, a rationalist; steeped in Lithuanian Talmudism, his Kabbalistic studies were in the Lithuanian tradition, that is, scholastic and well removed from the internalization that characterized Hasidism; he was, we shall see, versed in Haskalah writings; his aggadah commentary was, at least at the outset, I hope to show, an attempt to synthesize several rationalist moments—the medieval philosophical tradition of Maimonides and Isaac Arama on the one hand, and the rationalist self-improvement of Israel Salanter's Mussar movement on the other—in an enterprise of self-cultivation.[76] And I also hope to show that all this eventually gave way to an expressivist turn of his own, as the vectors of his religious life shifted from the top-down to the bottom-up.

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73 The influence of Neoplatonism on Romanticism is a major theme of M. H. Abrams's classic *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971); for the indirect influence of Kabbalah on Schelling via Jakob Boehme, see therein at 170.

On Kabbalah and Romanticism, see Eveline Goodman-Thau, Gerd Mattenklott, and Christoph Schulte, eds., *Kabbala und Romantik* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1994) and idem, *Kabbala und die Literatur der Romantik* (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 1999). See also, Christoph Schulte, "Kabbala-Rezeption in der Deutschen Romantik," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. Karl Erich Grozinger and Joseph Dan (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 295-313, as well as Wilhelm Schmidt Biggemann, ed., *Christliche Kabbala* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2003), and his essay therein, "Jakob Boehme und die Kabbala," 157–181. See also Wilhelm August Schulze, "Schelling und die Kabbala," *Judaica* 13, nos. 2–4 (1957): 65–99, 143–170, 210–232. This is a rich and important subject with many implications for modern intellectual and religious history, deserving further study. For an especially interesting demonstration of the possibilities here, see Paul Franks, "Inner Antisemitism or Kabbalistic Legacy? German Idealism's Relationship to Judaism," in *Faith and Reason*, ed. Fred Rush, Jürgen Stolzenberg, and Paul Franks, special issue, *Yearbook of German Idealism* 7 (2010): 254–279.

74 Leszek Kolakowski, *The Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 1, *The Founders*, trans. P. S. Falla (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 1–80. On Neoplatonism and Jewish philosophy and mysticism in general, see Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism in Jewish Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

75 Eisenstadt developed this idea in a number of writings. For his best-known statement, see "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.

76 We will see that the young Rav Kook was familiar with the less well known, and more rationalistic, of Salanter's writings—his essays from 1861–1862.

And yet, for all its modernity, Rav Kook's ultimate subjectivism is still deeply neo-Augustinian, that is, the inner self is ultimately grounded in the divine, albeit a rich, multifaceted divinity.[77] Kabbalah plays a key role here in that the inner motions of the subjective self come to be taken as manifestations of divine forces coursing through both the material and spiritual universes, and in distinctively modern ways, not least in his emphasis on the individual sense of inner freedom. Yet the highly structured tradition out of which this expressivism grew does not vanish; it abides and creates a tension in Rav Kook's mature thought between structure and antistructure, reason and the subject, between the ways in which his theology functions less as doctrine and more as the interpretation of the religious life, his and that of his times. It is this tension that makes his thought so dynamic and at times seemingly self-contradictory.[78] We hope this work will deepen our understanding of those defining tensions, which he exhibits so vividly, and which course through the history of Jewish thought, and indeed of religion, as a whole.

This subjective turn is intimately connected to Rav Kook's eventual turn towards nationalism, which itself represents a transferral of the individualism of the human subject to the life of peoples. As Louis Dumont has written: "The nation is precisely the type of global society which corresponds to the paramountcy (*sic*) of the individual as value. Not only does the one historically accompany the other, but the interdependence between them is clear, so that we may say that the nation is a global society composed of people who think of themselves as individuals."[79] And a key contention of the architect of the Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin, was that the murder of a nation and an individual are in many ways deeply the same.[80]

Stylistically, this subjective turn is reflected in Rav Kook's mounting recourse to the genre of spiritual diary, a comparative rarity in Jewish religious history. Moshe Idel

77 Lest this sound wildly anachronistic, it is worth noting Peter Brown's observations regarding St. Augustine's *Confessions*: "If to be a 'Romantic' means to be a man acutely aware of being caught in an existence that denies him the fullness for which he craves, to feel that he is defined by his tension towards something else, by his capacity for faith, for hope, for longing, to think of himself as a wanderer seeking a country that is always distant, but made ever-present to him by the quality of the love that 'groans' for it, then Augustine has imperceptibly become a 'Romantic.'" Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 150.

78 I am here deliberately alluding to a cluster of writings in anthropology, sociology, and theology, which develop these broader themes largely in isolation from each other: Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969); Touraine, *Critique of Modernity*; and George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

79 Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 10. In his *German Ideology: From France to Germany and Back* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), Dumont discusses at length the difference between nationalist and liberal forms of individualism.

80 Much has been written on this, of course; I am especially indebted to Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

has written of such Jewish mystical diaries as have been written, particularly those of the sixteenth century, that "their emergence is part of a larger phenomenon that may be described as the turn from an objective form of Kabbalah to a much more subjective one," and that they are regularly accompanied by Messianic awareness.[81] We will, in the final chapter, see the salience of that observation with regard to Rav Kook. This is not to say that his journal began as part of a Messianic project, but rather that his journal work, and in particular, his exploration of subjectivity—first his own, and then that of others, was crucial to the process through which his eschatology emerged.

Journal Writing as Spiritual Practice

In the coming chapters we will see Rav Kook writing in a variety of traditional genres: textual commentary, sermonics, responsa, poetry, essays, moralizing tracts, and never entirely finding himself in any of them. In *Midbar Shur* and *'Eyn Ayah* his prolixity and the mounting rush of his ideas overwhelm the respective genres of sermon and commentary, making them rough going for the average student (and likely unhearable for the intended listeners of *Midbar Shur*). We will see him begin and set aside a number of commentarial projects, and one senses a kind of restlessness as he moves through these genres. We will find a genre in which he most truly seems to have found himself qua thinker, the spiritual diary.

It has long been noted that the vast body of Jewish literature contains few if any mystical autobiographies; Moshe Idel has attributed this to the tradition's overwhelming emphasis on the collective personality of Israel, with a concomitantly "objectivistic type of discourse," reflecting a cultural decision that the community is to be shaped by "common denominators that are religiously oriented, synchronized performances."[82] Only in sixteenth-century Safedian Kabalah, Idel writes, do we first find full-fledged autobiography—from the hands of Yoseph Karo, Hayim Vital, and Elazar Azikri—"their emergence is part of a larger phenomenon that may be described as the turn from an objective form of Kabbalah to a much more subjective one" and is of a piece with the Messianic self-perception of the writers.[83]

Jeffrey (Yossi) Chajes has probed the *problematiques* of early modern Jewish spiritual diaries and their evasion of the neat genre divisions of "autobiography" and "diarykeeping."[84] He notes that the term *pinqas* first appears as designating some sort of spiritual diary—the sense in which Rav Kook used the term—in reference to a dream journal kept by the Sabbatian prophet Mordechai Ashkenazi (1650–1729). During the Middle Ages it meant "ledger book" and thus later lent itself to the notion of keeping a ledger for the soul.

81 Moshe Idel, preface to *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, by Morris M. Faierstein (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), xv–xxii, xviii.

82 Ibid., xv–xxii.

83 Ibid., xviii.

84 J. H. Chajes, "Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic Historical Reflections on Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 1–15.

We find mention of it as a spiritual practice in a major seventeenth-century work with which Rav Kook was familiar, Isaiah Horowitz's *Shnei Luhot Ha-Berit*.[85] Chajes observes that this development seems of a piece with the practice of Puritan diarykeeping, both reflecting a broader cultural process of disciplining the religious life. There is great truth in that, but even so, I believe, attending to the differences between Puritan diaries and the ones we will examine here is instructive.[86]

Tom Webster, in a very enlightening study of Puritan diaries, has described them under the Foucauldian rubric of "technology of the self." The Puritan diary was, he writes, "a means by which the godly self was maintained, indeed constructed, through the action of writing." Further, the "act of writing, then, seems to have power in itself, writing becomes a way of validating experience." Puritan diaries offer an ordering of experience, both internal and external, discerning patterns of the divine in one's daily life, hopefully patterns that reveal salvation; and the patterns, as the diarists read their own lives, range from the "closed," secure in their salvation, to the "open," in which salvation is not yet assured.[87] He points out the relationship between Puritan diarykeeping and the ledgering practices of early modern capitalism, which reflected what Charles Taylor has called "the punctual self."[88] This process also played out in traditional Judaism; indeed, scholars have noted that none other than Benjamin Franklin contributed to the diary keeping of the Mussar movement, which was its own translation of the "punctual self" into the idiom of traditional Judaism.[89]

Here too, Taylor's picture of the modern trajectory is illuminating; just as the "punctual self" eventually transformed into the "expressive self," finding meaning in its own recesses, so too the diarykeeping of Mussar and the rationally ordered sense of self it bespoke, gives way in Rav Kook's journal entries to a more expressive self. And yet unlike

85 See therein, *Yoma Derekh Hayim*, §1660, 2:444; see also Meir Poppers, *Hanhagot Ha-Tzadiqim* §31—both cited in Chajes, "Accounting for the Self," 12

86 It also seems to me that the emergence of the spiritual diary seems of a piece with the emergence of the *hanhagot*, or conduct literature, and shares with that genre a latent potential for antinomianism. See Zev Gries, *Sifrut Ha-Hanhagot* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1989), 22–28. At the same time, Gries points out, at 102, that the conservative tenor of the *hanhagot* literature shows the limitations of the antinomian impulse even within Kabbalistic circles, and even in some touched by Sabbatianism. Both genres, though, do seem to represent some more pressing personalization of religious life.

87 Tom Webster, "Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality," *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 1 (1996): 33–56; 40, 47, 55–56. Another helpful discussion of Puritan diaries is chapter five of David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

88 On the underlying foundations of modern bookkeeping, see Michael Zakim, "Bookkeeping as Ideology: Capitalist Knowledge in Nineteenth Century America," *Commonplace* 6, no. 3 (April 2006), www.common-place.org/vol-06/no-03/zakim.

89 See Nancy Sinkoff, "Strategy and Ruse in the Haskalah of Mendel Lefin of Satanow," in *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, ed. Shmuel Feiner and David Sorkin (London: Littman, 2001), 86–102.

the Kabbalistic diaries of Vital and others, Rav Kook is not recording specific experiences in narrative form. Rather, his writing *is* the experience: the focal point of his own consciousness is created by the focusing act of his writing, and the comparatively disjointed nature of his diary entries is itself reflective of the divergent, indeed fragmented, range of ideas and experiences he is trying to understand, both within himself and without, in the fragmented Jewish society of early twentieth-century Russia.

Rav Kook's diarykeeping, instead of ordering his experiences as such, as in the writings of Puritan or Kabbalistic diarists, enabled him to register contradictory views and experiences, to try and square the circles of his commitment to tradition, and his openness to the mutually antagonistic dimensions of his personality and his times. (Indeed, it was in these years that Berdyczewsky urged Hebrew writers to take up autobiography as the genre that makes for the greatest authenticity, precisely by registering the individual author in all his contradictions.)[90] Rav Kook's journal was thus an alternative forum to the highly structured genres of rabbinic literature that were his daily fare, a space for what Lewis White Beck has called "philosophical exhibition," an embodiment of ideas as they register on the thinker.[91] I might add that what the reader experiences as "exhibition," Rav Kook seems to have experienced as illumination, and, eventually, revelation. Nevertheless, there is a strong common denominator between Rav Kook's diarykeeping that of the Kabbalists and Puritans—all have a strong soteriological thrust, that is, all seek to discern patterns of redemption. In Rav Kook's distinctively modern idiom, that pattern is to be found precisely in the midst of seeming chaos.

The Early Writings: Esoteric and Exoteric

The works we will chiefly look at here are: his short-lived journal *'Ittur Sofrim*; commentaries to Talmudic passages and other works, including to the *Shulhan 'Arukh*; his polemical work on tefillin *Hevesh Pe'er*; his first spiritual diary, *Metziot Qatan*; the spiritual diaries of his Boisk years, *Pinqasim* 15 and 16, some of which his son wove in to the small gem of a Mussar treatise *Mussar Avikha*; his smaller *Mahberot Qetanot Boisk*; his collection

90 See Berdyczewsky's 1889 essay, "Devarim Ahadim 'al Devar Ha-Toladah ve-Ha-Autobiografiyot," reprinted in Holzman's full edition of his collected works, *Kitvei Micha Josef Berdyczewski*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1996–2002), 177–180, and the discussion thereof in Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 221ff. Moseley notes, inter alia, that during this period Berdyczewsky was deeply under the sway of Rousseau, whose influence I will argue is also present in Rav Kook's writings of this period.

91 Lewis White Beck, "Philosophy as Literature," in *Philosophical Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1980), 234–255. He writes therein at 244: "[T]he great philosophical poets who did not just quote—Dante, Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, Hardy—their mode of poetically philosophizing is not quoting but exhibiting. They embody philosophical stances in situations and character so that the reader can *see* (emphasis in the original) philosophical models instead of having to think about abstract philosophical concepts. Theirs is a logic of images, not of concepts."

of sermons from the mid–1890s *Midbar Shur*; some essays of his published only posthumously; his massive aggadah commentary *'Eyn Ayah*; his essays from 1901-1904 on Jewish nationalism; the hitherto unpublished treatise recently issued as *Li-Nevukhei Ha-Dor*; and the last of the spiritual diaries he kept in Eastern Europe.[92] We will also briefly look at some other writings of his—poems, halakhic responsa, commentaries, and brief essays.[93]

We will observe that his private notebooks regularly work in an explicitly Kabbalistic vein, more so than his writings intended for public consumption. This in turn raises the question of esoteric versus exoteric writings. As Elliot Wolfson has observed, there are two kinds of esotericism: one is the political, associated with Leo Strauss's influential understanding of Maimonides, in which a discrete truth is shielded from view for its potentially destabilizing, subversive effects; another is what Wolfson calls "essential esotericism," in which the truth being concealed is esoteric in its essence, such that it cannot but be revealed except by concealment, and vice versa—a mind-bending paradox which arises from Kabbalah and philosophy's attempts to grapple with the most basic issues of metaphysics at the farthest limits of understanding.[94] We will explore the ways in which Rav Kook at times translates esoteric concepts in his exoteric writings, while at others, the exoteric—and explicitly philosophical—abides on its own terms.

Self-Cultivation, Philosophical Ethics, Mussar

The theme of self-cultivation animates much of these writings in two ways: first, as an ideational theme with which he seeks to channel the positive energies of the Mussar movement into what he sees as a more positive and richer direction; and second, as a reflection of his own efforts to develop his own identity as a *talmid hakham* who sees himself as standing at the crossroads of several traditions—halakhah, Lithuanian Kabbalah, and medieval Jewish philosophy.[95] I will argue in the conclusion that only later did Hasidism become a genuinely live option for him.

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92 I discuss the full provenance of this and other diaries in the course of the work.

93 The other available works of his from this period not much discussed in the present work are the sermons printed in Otzarot, 2:148–172; as well as the materials gathered in Menahem Arieli, ed., *Neshamah shel Shabbat: Osef Ma'amarim Toraniyyim le-Zikhro shel Ha-Rav Eliyahu Shlomo Ra'anan ztql* (Hevron: Shalmei Ari'eli, 1999), 52–82, and various sermons in the anthologies on festivals edited by Ben-Zion Shapira and published under the title *Meorot Ha-Re'ayah*. Those volumes have been published in Jerusalem by Ha-Makhon 'al-Shem Ha-Ratzyah on Shavuot (1994), Hanukah and Purim (1995), the festivals of Tishrei (1995), Shabbat (2013) and prayer (2016).

94 See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia—Kabbalist and Prophet: Hermeneutics, Theosophy and Theurgy* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2000), 9–93. For a far more succinct presentation, see Wolfson's comments in his untitled book note *Journal of Religion in Europe* 2 (2009): 314–318, reviewing Moshe Halbertal's *Concealment and Revelation*. My thanks to Daniel Abrams for that latter reference.

95 On nineteenth-century Lithuanian Kabbalah as a constituting a distinctive tradition, see Raphael Shuchat, "Qabbalat Lita ke-Zerem 'Atzmai be-Sifrut Ha-Qabbalah," *Qabbalah* 10

A number of moral philosophers writing from very different perspectives have, in recent decades and for reasons of their own—besides a shared sense of the limits of Kantian, and especially Rawlsian, ethics—drawn renewed attention to the role of self-cultivation in the history of Western ethics.[96] Thus, Alasdair MacIntyre in his landmark 1984 volume *After Virtue* sought to shift the emphasis of ethical discussion away from Kantian deontological ethics in favor of a reengagement with an Aristotelian ethics of virtue, whose practices take their shape from their embeddedness within tradition.[97] Martha Nussbaum, to take another prominent example, has written major studies of Hellenistic ethics as a form of self-cultivation and has applied this focus on human flourishing in her writings on contemporary issues.[98] For his part, Michel Foucault also sought to shift the ground of ethical discussion away from Kant and towards Aristotle, not, as did MacIntyre, to recapture the Aristotelian ethos as such, but to draw attention to ethics as a set of actions in and through which one creates the self; or, to be more precisely Foucauldian, view the creation of the self as as a negotiation with the dominant discourses of a time and place.[99] While many Foucauldian analyses seem to spell the death of agency, they do helpfully draw attention to the cultivation of the self as a central feature of ethics in Western

(2004): 181–206. We will have much more to say on this in coming chapters. On philosophy as more than the technical exercise of unaided reason, but rather a tradition of its own, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Philosophia as One of the Religious Traditions of Mankind," in his *Modern Culture from a Comparative Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 19–50.

96 The convergence I am discussing here is akin to the convergence between virtue ethics and continental philosophy discussed by Sabina Lovibond in her very interesting (but too often opaque) *Ethical Formation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); her attempt to synthesize the two, despite what she calls the "counter-teleology" of Foucauldian ethics, is to be found at 169–174.

The argument that Kant's own ethical oeuvre is itself richer and more directed towards self-cultivation than is generally thought is made at length in Robert B. Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

97 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

98 Thus see, for example, Nussbaum's exhaustive study *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and her many other works in this vein on contemporary issues, such as her *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

99 See generally, Paul Rabinow, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, vol. 1, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. R. Hurley et al. (New York: New Press, 1997), esp. 253–301. Very, very briefly, Foucault called attention to what he characterized as the four elements of ethics: The "substance of ethics," that is, the domain of the self that is the subject of ethical thought and action (in the premodern period, flesh and desire, in the modern, feeling); the "mode of subjectivation," or the nature and means of the authority imposed on the individual; the "techniques of the self," through which one creates oneself under the impress of ethical ideals; and the *telos*, the mode of being which one finally seeks to achieve.

history.[100] Most pertinent for us is Foucault's recognition of the key role of self-cultivation in ancient and medieval philosophy, and his and our indebtedness to the works of the late Pierre Hadot. A historian of philosophy, Hadot, in a series of significant historical studies, called attention to the ways in which much ancient and medieval philosophy, far from being the disembodied analytic discourse so characteristic of contemporary philosophy departments, was a rigorous practice aimed at self-cultivation towards a life lived in wisdom.[101]

These turns in ethical theory have left their mark on the historical study of Jewish ethics. Amram Tropper has demonstrated the deep indebtedness of *Pirqei Avot* to Hellenistic ethics, Jonathan Schofer has written on spiritual exercises in rabbinic culture, and Shmuel (Richie) Lewis has written a remarkably penetrating comparative study of humility in Greco-Roman and rabbinic thought.[102] Josef Stern has made deft use of Hadot in his powerful readings of Maimonides.[103] At much greater length and with vast historical sweep, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson has demonstrated that the cultivation of human flourishing was central to the rabbis of the Talmud, to the medieval philosophers, and to the Kabbalists as well. This long-standing concern with, and discourse on, *eudaemonia*, she writes, underwent a crucial transformation in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries, as Maimonidean naturalistic ethics and the depersonalized theology in which it was grounded gave way to more rabbinic, personalistic conceptions of God, of the affective dimensions of personality, the essential holiness of Israel, the centrality of obedience and keeping mitzvot and,

100 A deft analysis that draws on Foucault while moving beyond him to recapture the idea of agency in a seemingly hidebound traditionalism, even as I differ with some of her approach, is provided by Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), esp. 27–34.

For the argument that in his last years Foucault returned to the idea of the subject, and revised his dissection of power/knowledge as a step towards self-creation, see Eric Paras, *Foucault 2.0: Beyond Power and Knowledge* (New York: Other Press, 2006), esp. chaps. 4 and 5.

101 See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); for Hadot's own comments and criticism of Foucault's use of his work, see therein at 206–213. I will return to Hadot in chapter three.

102 Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 51–87; Jonathan Schofer, *The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Shmuel (Richie) Lewis, *Ve-Lifnei Kavod ʿAnavah: Idiyal Ha-ʿAnavah ki-Yesod bi-Sefatam Ha-Mussarit shel Hazal* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2013). And, more recently, Yair Furstenberg, "Rabbinic Responses to Greco-Roman Ethics of Self-Formation in Tractate *Avot*," in *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity: New Perspectives*, ed. Maren R. Niehoff and Joshua Levinson (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 125–148, surveys recent scholarship and traces further directions for understanding this question's literary horizon.

103 See Josef Stern, "Maimonides on the Growth of Knowledge and the Limitations of the Intellect," in *Maîmonide: Philosophe et Savant*, ed. T. Levy and R. Rashed (Louvain: Peeters, 2004), 143–191, in particular part 4; T. Levy and R. Rashed, "Maimonides' Epistemology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. Kenneth Seeskin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 105–133, 127–129; and, in general, Alan L. Mittleman, *A Short History of Jewish Ethics* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012).

under the influence of Kabbalah, an emphasis on mystical union, *devequt*, with God.[104] In parsing these terms, a genuine difference between the self-cultivation of the philosophic tradition and that of the Kabbalah is that the former does not partake of the theurgic dimensions of the latter—that is, the philosopher does not aim to effect changes in the inner workings of the divine. Indeed, in philosophy's own terms, such a project is literally inconceivable and blasphemous too. Rather, the philosophers seek to bring themselves into alignment with the divine intelligence animating the universe. The Kabbalist by contrast seeks to work restorative changes within the Godhead itself, which is conceived in explicitly mythical terms.

Notwithstanding the accuracy of Tirosh-Samuelson's major conclusions regarding the relative displacement of philosophical ethics by Kabbalah in early modern Jewry and beyond, elements of the philosophical tradition did persist in rabbinical culture in Eastern Europe well into modernity. Thus, for instance, Harris Bor has shown how elements of the medieval philosophical tradition shaped the moral views of the Haskalah, and through its more traditionalist proponents, some of the early teachings of Mussar.[105] Alan Brill has called attention to serious engagement with elements of the philosophical tradition, in particular the writings of Maimonides, on the part of the Gaon of Vilna and some (though by no means all) of his disciples.[106]

For my part I would argue that a century later, the early writings of Rav Kook, and an investigation of his Eastern European milieu, offer important evidence of the persistence of the philosophical tradition, not as a vestigial phenomenon, but as a source on which he actively drew in seeking to meet what he saw as the theological and societal challenges of his day.

Kabbalah, Modernity, and Experience

This work is very much about modernity and the deep modernization of Jewish thought, including the Kabbalah.

What do we mean by that? In an important 2016 monograph, Jonathan Garb argues for what he characterizes as the "autonomy" of modern Kabbalah relative to earlier periods. Modernity's salient feature here "is accelerating and conscious change. Consciousness contributes to acceleration and acceleration of consciousness. And hence the attendant

104 Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge and Well-Being* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003); her conclusions as to the change of the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries are to be found therein at 394–498. It bears noting that a good bit of Tirosh's rethinking of conventional discourse on Jewish ethics was prefigured some forty years ago in Jacob B. Agus, *The Vision and the Way: An Interpretation of Jewish Ethics* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966); this volume, like much of Agus's work, has yet to receive its due.

105 Harris Bor, "Moral Education in the Age of Jewish Enlightenment" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1996). My thanks to Dr. Bor for making a copy of his work available to me.

106 Alan Brill, "Auxiliary to *Hokhmah*: The Writings of the Vilna Gaon and Philosophical Terminology," in *The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples*, ed. Moshe Hallamish, Yosef Rivlin, and Rafael Shuchat (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 9–38.

psychological changes, such as individual self-awareness. Therefore, modernity is not, as some still have it, a discrete content, related perhaps to secularization, liberalization or progressive thinking . . . [it] is entirely a process in which we ourselves are embedded."[107]

Garb's observation deeply resonates with my own thoughts and foregrounds two elements crucial to this work: modernity as a set of processes, and its new attention to, and ways of looking at, the inner life.

First, modernity as processes. As noted earlier, in a major essay of 2000, Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, dean of Israeli sociology and a major figure in social theory, put forth his conception of "multiple modernities," and developed it in a number of influential studies in the ensuing years.[108] For Eisenstadt, the welter of forces and movements we call modernity is best understood as a collection of open-ended processes, which, amid genuinely new sociopolitical conditions, radicalize tensions within premodern civilization, among them universalism and particularity, pragmatism and utopia, discipline and freedom. "The idea of multiple modernities," he writes, "presumes that the best way to understand the contemporary world—indeed to explain the history of modernity—is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs." Thus, crucially, "modernity and Westernization are not identical," even if the West, so to speak, came first and still serves as "a basic reference point for others."[109]

What then do we mean by modernity? "[S]hifts in the conception of human agency, and of its place in the flow of time . . . a conception of the future characterized by a number of possibilities realizable through autonomous human agency."[110] In modernity, "the premises on which the social, ontological and political order were based, and the legitimation of that order, were no longer taken for granted."[111] This destabilization of hitherto immutable fixities, accompanied by new forms of self-awareness or self-consciousness and a steady broadening of local horizons, led to "a belief in the possibility that society could be actively formed by conscious human activity." This mix of destabilization and new agency yielded within modernity two alternative visions of social construction. One, which believed in

> the possibility of bridging the gap between the transcendental and the mundane orders—of realizing through conscious human agency, exercised in social life, major utopian and eschatological visions. The second emphasi(zing) a growing recognition of the legitimacy of

107 Jonathan Garb, *Ha-Qabbalah be-'Et Ha-Hadashah ki-Tehum Mehqar Autonomi* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2016), ii.

108 Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129 (Winter 2000): 1–29. I have discussed some of these themes in relation to Rav Kook in a 2013 paper "Multiple Modernity as Theory and Theology: Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt and Rav Kook," available online at www.academia.edu/41236006/Multiple_Modernity_as_Theory_and_Theology_Shmuel_Noah_Eisenstadt_and_Rav_Kook.

109 Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 2–3.

110 Ibid., 3.

111 Ibid.

> multiple individual and group goals and interests, as a consequence allow(ing) for multiple interpretations of the common good.[112]

Both moments—the pluralist and the monist—attempt to deal with the profound dislocations generated by new science and philosophy that led to, in the words of Claude Lefort so often quoted by Eisenstadt, "the loss of markers of certainty."[113]

Rav Kook, in his life and thought, squarely exemplified both moments, of pluralism and monism. On the one hand, he, like other modern Jewish mystics, was drawn to the meeting, and interpenetration, of transcendence with immanence. At the same time, he worked hard to take full cognizance of as wide a range of views and perspectives as he could—and it was here that we see his most creative uses of Kabbalah, to make sense both of the multiplicity of contradictory lifeworlds in an overarching monotheistic framework, and of their creative interactions in and through massive historical change.

The usefulness of Eisenstadt's framework for understanding Rav Kook becomes clear from Danielle Hervieu-Leger's characterization. This conception, she says:

> stresses plurality while remaining anchored in a conceptual framework of modernity as a specific type of civilization, even though it refuses to determine any specific description of modernity . . . it offers an invitation to grasp the historical configurations of the contradictions inherent in the program of modernity . . . autonomy of individual subjects (vs.) the imperatives of social control . . . the necessity of change (vs.) the need to ensure continuity of the collective bond . . . the pragmatic vision of a world to be constructed here and now (vs.) the utopian call to the advent of a completely different world . . . a realist acceptance of the world as it functions (vs.) transcendence . . . pluralist self-assertion of communities (vs.) the universalist goal of a united, common world . . . (all) take their place as elements in a variety of cultural programs perpetually reworked.[114]

That Rav Kook was able to speak about modernity as an arena of transcendence from within the recesses of tradition may seem puzzling. Yet these dynamics of modernity had, for Eisenstadt and those who share his perspective, deep historical roots in premodernity and in particular the so-called Axial Age civilizations (as first identified by Karl Jaspers): ancient Greece and Israel, Imperial China, Hindu and Buddhist civilization, ancient Persia—further articulated in their inheritors in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. At their core, these civilizations shared a distinction between mundane and ultimate, or transcendent, reality, and disembeddedness from closed kinship and territorial units, which together gave rise to the idea of reorganizing society along transcendental lines. This in turn generated ongoing tensions within societies about the extent to which

112 Ibid., 5.

113 Lefort's comment appears in his *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 215.

114 Daniele Hervieu-Leger, "Multiple Religious Modernities: A New Approach to Contemporary Religiosity," in *Comparing Modernities: Pluralism versus Homogeneity; Essays in Honor of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Refael and Yitzhak Sternberg (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), 327–338, 332–333.

they were or were not realizing their transcendent goals, while also generating new social classes tasked with conceptualizing those ideals and managing the inevitable tensions.[115]

Of a piece with modernity's distinctive sense of human agency was what Eisenstadt calls "reflexivity," a new form of self-awareness, opening onto not only dramatically different understandings of the human condition, but "question(ing) the very givenness of such visions and the institutional patterns related to them . . . an awareness of the possibility of multiple visions, that could, in fact, be contested."[116]

A crucial feature of modern thought, then, much of modern Kabbalah included, is its self-awareness as being situated in time. Simply put, medievals didn't think of themselves as medieval, while moderns think of themselves as modern. Se'adyah and Maimonides were perfectly well aware that they were writing in what we call an Islamicate context—but they did not think that that Islamicate context, and certainly not its sociopolitical dimensions, was itself intimately connected to, or mattered for, the abiding truth and persuasive power of their ideas.[117] The same can largely be said for the Iberian and Franco-German figures at the emergence of the Kabbalah. By contrast, as Garb puts it, in modern Kabbalah textual interpretation is regularly refracted through self-perception and sacred biography, reflection on differing forms of Jewish practice and study (of a piece, I would suggest, with the general splintering that so defines modern Jewish experience), a lessening of esotericism, and a regularly explicit distancing from non-Jewish ideas (similarly of a piece with the modern blurring of boundaries between Jews and non-Jews).[118] These too, are features of Rav Kook's oeuvre, even as his exploration of the relationships of Jews to non-Jews synthesizes profound distancing with profound identification.

Another facet of this situatedness in time, and the significance of situatedness in time, is the melding of immanence and transcendence, the fusion of higher meanings with the mundane. This process is best seen in Luther's translation of the Bible into the

115 For a very helpful survey of this idea, including critical discussion, see Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas, eds, *The Axial Age and its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). For a brief, but very helpful, discussion of the Axial Age idea in the context of Biblical religion, see Alan L. Mittleman, *A Short History of Jewish Ethics* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), 16–52. For a brief, helpful illumination of how these themes structured secular modernity, see Charles Taylor, "Western Secularity," in *Rethinking Secularism*, ed. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan van Antwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 31–53.

116 Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," 4.

117 I am talking here about the broader Islamic cultural and intellectual context, and not about immediate political contexts, of which, as Leo Strauss has shown, medieval and early modern thinkers were acutely aware. But their conception of truth was one that transcended the circumstances of their works' time and place, unlike Strauss's *bête noire* of modern historicism.

118 Garb, *Ha-Qabbalah be-'Et Ha-Hadashah ki-Tehum Mehqar Autonomi*, 82. In a related vein, Adam Shear has demonstrated that the work regularly taken as the fountainhead of Jewish essentialist nationhood, Yehudah Ha-Levi's *Kuzari*, was not seen as such until the turn of the twentieth century, and was a staple of Jewish humanistic writing. See his *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), which I have briefly discussed in *Makor Rishon*, Shabbat supplement, February 19, 2010.

vernacular, as well as further developments, such as the Protestant ethic as understood by Weber, yielding what Taylor has called "the affirmation of ordinary life," the celebration of the body and its situatedness in time and space—something which we will see preoccupied Rav Kook a great deal. Not to mention one of the most volatile unions of trascendence and immanence: nationalism.

Moderns inescapably see themselves as caught up in historical processes, whether they choose to swim with them or revolt against them.[119] As we shall see, Rav Kook, following and greatly elaborating on the ideas of Moshe Hayim Luzzatto, came to see the acceptance of historical change as crucial, not merely to his own thinking, but more consequentially, to God's own self-fulfillment in and through humanity and the world. We will see this process starting to take shape before his move to Palestine in 1904.

Second, modernity's new attention to *the inner life.* For Garb, the key figure in the sixteenth-century inauguration of this process of Kabbalah's inward turn is Hayim Vital, who canonized his prematurely departed master Luria, and concomitantly elevated the Zohar's stature as the axis joining the historical figure of Bar Yohai to Luria. Indeed, Garb notes, Luria's interpretations of the Zohar became for many the exclusive interpretive grid for the study of Zohar—to the point where the vast portions of the Zohar that fell outside Luria's interests became less studied—precisely because, for so many, Luria's own experience was itself the revelation. His readings, in effect, became a template (or what I call "second scripture") through which the sacred text (i.e., Zohar) is to be understood. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Garb writes, this modernization of Kabbalah engendered an inward, individualizing turn, with the emergence of Beshtian Hasidism, the schools of Ramhal, of Shalom Sharabi, and of the Gaon of Vilna, each of which took Luria's heritage in new directions. Three of these four figure prominently in our study. Significantly, for each school, a unique, charismatic figure became not only an authority and teacher, but an exemplar whose own life and practice was itself a form of revelation.

Which brings us to the very modern terms—"mysticism" and "experience."

Let's start with "experience." The term was itself most famously introduced into the study of religion in William James's monumental *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, as, in his words, "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine."[120] James can helpfully be contrasted here with two other foundational works of the period, Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* and Emile Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* Otto, shying away from the seeming open-endedness and implicit naturalism of James's formulation, foregrounds the encounter with the "Wholly Other," as the defining feature of religion; Durkheim, while sharing James's naturalism, argues

119 I've discussed some of these issues at greater length, with slightly different framing, in Yehudah Mirsky, "Modernizing Orthodoxies: The Case of Feminism," in *To Be a Jewish Woman / Lihiyot Ishah Yehudiyah*, vol. 4 of *Kolech Proceedings*, ed. Tova Cohen (Jerusalem: Kolech–Religious Women's Forum, 2007), English section, 37–51.

120 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902).

for the inescapably social and collective nature of religion, as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things . . . that unite its adherents in a single moral community."[121] The idea of religious experience has of course generated intense and heated discussion for over a century. Critics of the concept highlight its essentialism, individualism, and inherent resistance to anything like objective scientific or critical analysis. It also pays scant attention to the legal-ethical dimensions of religion. Others, though, highlight its usefulness for trying to do justice to religious adherents' self-understandings, while inviting conversation among others, including adherents of other traditions.

Ann Taves has, after exhaustively surveying these debates, suggested, following Durkheim, a reframing of religious experience through what she terms an "attributive" approach, namely, turning

> our attention to the processes whereby people sometimes ascribe . . . special characteristics to things that we (as scholars) associate with terms such as "religious," "magical," "mystical," "spiritual," et cetera . . . how humans have used things deemed religious (simple ascriptions—parentheses in original) as building blocks to create the more complex formations (composite ascriptions—parentheses in original) we typically refer to as "religions," or "spiritualities."[122]

This, she suggests, is a way of honoring people's understandings of their worlds, making room for contextualization and analysis, and avoiding reductionism and the shoehorning of any manner of things into rigid categories.

Taves's literally demystifying approach to the question of religious experience is congenial to the present study, concerned as it is with a figure whose mature thought was precisely not only seeing but living divine meaning in the seemingly mundane, and seeing experience, individual and collective, as itself the site of God's revelation in the world. What's more, her approach makes possible the discussion, qua religious experience, of religious phenomena with which conventional analytic categories have a very hard time, such as the text-soaked praxis of rabbinic Judaism.

Turning to "mysticism": In an important recent study, Boaz Huss has raised serious questions about the very term, as used regarding Judaism and other religious traditions. He forcefully argues that not all the texts, figures, movements, and practices brought under that term are best thought of as part of one large category; and that the very category of mysticism is shot through with theological and metaphysical assumptions about whether divinity is personal or abstract, how humans alone or together connect with the divine, assumptions deeply reflecting distinctive features of Western modernity, not least

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121 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John Harvely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1954); Otto's work was first published in 1917, Durkheim's in 1912.

122 Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: A Building-Block Approach to the Study of Religion and Other Special Things* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8–9. In her book, Taves discusses at length how the kind of cross-cultural methods routinely employed in anthropology and ethnography can be employed for the study of religious experience on its own terms.

the focus on individual experience and relative devaluation of ritual practice so characteristic of liberal theology. The study of Jewish mysticism was, relatedly, stamped from the outset (by Buber and Scholem, each in their own way) by a neo-Romantic search for a Judaism that would speak to a modern concern for authenticity, loosed from the bonds of traditional community and authority. Placing further study on a more solid foundation, Huss says, does not require substituting mysticism with some other more successful overarching category, but fundamentally rethinking the history of the phenomena studied under that rubric up to now, paying even more careful attention to the internal dynamics of religious traditions, and studying figures, texts, events, and practices in their distinctive historical contexts.[123]

In looking at such contexts, one very helpful distinction is Moshe Idel's differentiation between theosophy and ecstasy.[124] And it seems to me one way of characterizing Jewish mysticism is that it deliberately seeks to shape religious ecstasy and experience via theosophy and vice versa — through the matrix of Jewish practice and ritual. One way of thinking about Rav Kook, then, is that in his hands Jewish society, and history as such, undergo a kind of theosophical ritualization.[125]

I will in this volume's conclusion discuss the ways in which mysticism, even if understood as carefully as Huss suggests, and religious experience and even philosophy too are perhaps joined at the root.

This Writer's Premises and Commitments

A further corollary to this self-reflective scholarly approach, it seems to me, is greater explicitness about the theological and other assumptions of one's own research, not in order to hermetically seal off discussion, but rather to try and make as clear as possible what it is that we are trying to say.

Taking up the spirit of Huss's exhortations, I will make plain at the outset that this study is historicist: it tries to make sense of one figure's development in his time and place, as he inherited multiple traditions of textual study and religious practice, and worked, as both communal rabbi and burgeoning thinker, to make sense of himself, his time, and his own place within it.[126]

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123 Huss lays this out at length in his *She'elat Qiyumah shel Mistiqah Yehudit* (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv: Van Leer/Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 2016).

124 Moshe Idel, "Yofyah shel Ishah: Le-Toldotehah shel Ha-Mistiqah Ha-Yehudit," in *Be-Ma'agalei Hasidim: Kovetz Mehqarim le-Zikhro shel Mordechai Wilensky*, ed. Immanuel Etkes et al. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2000), 317–334.

125 On the centrality of ritual to Jewish theology, see Moshe Idel, *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 2005).

126 In my thinking of religion very much in terms of cumulative traditions, I am deeply indebted to Wilfred Cantwell Smith's classic study *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1961).

All readers and interpreters work with assumptions; the question is which assuptions, and how they are understood. This work is written for readers for whom historical context is key to a work's meaning—the writer's longitudinal positioning within their own and sundry other traditions, as well as the histories of human culture. To the extent that any thinker saw him or herself as interpreting a timeless text in a timeless context, that self-undertstanding must of course be accounted for in a careful, historically minded reading—but also one that does not constrain or delimit the range of interpretation.[127] Religious thinkers, creative and inventive as they may be, work, as do we all, within certain limits and assumptions. Those parameters not only set the terms of their reading and interpretation, but also of the authority they themselves have or do not have, and that the texts and tradition wield over them. Similarly, their readers bring to bear their own limits and assumptions. They see the thinkers and themselves as links in a shared chain or tradition of understanding and authority (and perhaps of revelation). Or they may see the thinkers and themselves as working in different traditions of understanding and authority, even as they work to understand those thinkers not only on their own, the readers', terms, as all share, if not necessarily forms of authority, the fundamentals of the human condition.

James Gordley has nicely captured this distinction between 1.) scholastics, whose commitment to a text from within a normative tradition obligates them to harmonize seeming contradictions and 2.) humanists, for whom the text is not normatively binding in the same way, or who bracket those commitments, and work to understand the text as much as possible in the contexts of how it came to be.[128] One feature of historically minded study, at least to my mind, is that it offers greater promise for imaginatively entering into the thought-worlds of traditionalists and nontraditionalists alike. This meeting point of human recognition and potential for dialogue is where ethics meets epistemology.

And so, I choose in this study not to read Rav Kook's works as a unified canon whose inconsistencies must be resolved in order for him to be authoritative. Rather, I choose to read them, and try to understand him, in terms of his time and place. My preference for this kind of reading is twofold—one epistemological, the other, moral: First, I do, in admittedly modern fashion, think that this reading brings us closer to the truth as we can understand it, which is to say, as lived by human beings like ourselves; second, I believe

127 The kind of reading I have in mind here has been nicely characterized as "moderate hermeneutics," in the spirit of Gadamer's "fusion of horizons"; see, in general, Shaun Gallagher, *Hermeneutics and Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). One piece of it is suggested by Arnaldo Momigliano's comment that "[m]odern methods of historical research are completely founded on the distinction between original and secondary sources," cited in Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe Their Own Myths?*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2. While I deeply appreciate much of what Veyne has to say, I differ with his ultimately Nietzschean reading of all knowledge as arbitrary, because that reading leaves us unable to make sense, as readers, of our moral lives.

128 James Gordley, "Humanists and Scholastics," in *Essays on Law and Religion: The Berkeley and Oxford Symposia in Honor of David Daube*, ed. Calum M. Carmichael (Berkeley: University of California at Berkeley, 1993), 13–28.

that historical study, and its interposition of time between past and present, affords a critical distance from which to assess authority claims and their implications for the infliction, or diminution, of human cruelty.[129]

As for my own theological commitments and assumptions, suffice it to say that I am committed to what I think of as the "second-person God" of Abrahamic traditions, such that we and the universe can turn to one another and say, "You"; that at the end of the day, our experience of people, things, and being has a human face, one which summons us to kindness.[130] That You is the ground of our moral obligations and our personhood, and we are the ground of His presence. That You is so all-encompassing, the moral obligations He issues so far-reaching, that utterly identifying Him with any ideology or system is the essence of idolatry; and that eschewal of idolatry is what frees us to be our best selves.[131] I am similarly committed to the Jewish people; to our having a shared, if deeply complicated, history, and our claim to a shared, if sure to be complicated, future. This commitment shapes my angles of vision, areas of concern, and aspiration that studies like this, historicist as they may be, can contribute to Jewish thought and practice in our time.[132]

At the same time, I do not think these commitments preclude dialogue and shared understanding with those who do not also share them, surely not for purposes of an historical study such as the one you are reading now. We can, with inquisitiveness, self-awareness, and humility, imaginatively enter with scholarly tools to a greater or lesser extent into the minds of those living in other times and places, even as we never claim fully to grasp them. On that basis we can arrive at our own judgements—celebratory, critical, and everything in between—aware of our own limitations.

There is perhaps an analogy here to the traditional rabbinic fourfold scheme of reading—*peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, *sod*; which I translate as plain sense, implicit sense, searching, and the unknown: figuring out what the words mean and what the author most likely was trying to say, understanding the historical circumstances and trajectories of ideas of which the writer and text are part, bringing these understandings to bear on our understandings of our own historical trajectories, commitments, and moral existential, questions; and, finally, recognizing the ultimate boundaries of our understandings and the human condition, and how those boundaries shape all we know and do, as we have no choice but to continue to do our best to try, to know, and act.

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129 For further discussion, see my "Three Questions: Orthodoxy's Power and After" (unpublished paper, 2008), available online at Berman Jewish Policy Archive, bjpa.org/search-results/publication/5241 and at academia.edu.

130 The reader who hears here echoes of Martin Buber, Aharon David Gordon, and Emmanuel Levinas, along with echoes of Rav Kook himself, will not be wrong.

131 The reader who hears here echoes of Reinhold Niebuhr will not be wrong.

132 Much of my own orientation is resonant with that described by Ehud Luz, "Beyn Hagut le-Mehqar be-Mif'alo shel Eliezer Schweid," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought: The Eliezer Schweid Jubilee Volume* 19 (2005): 39-62.